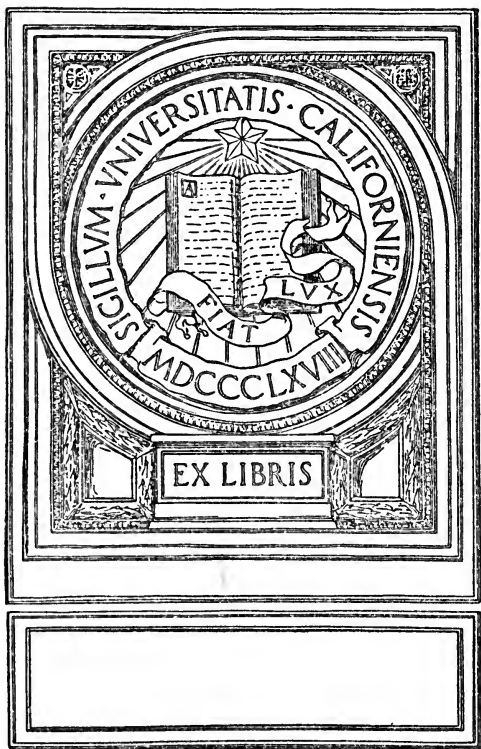


OLD WASHINGTON



HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD







OLD WASHINGTON







Henry Albertson 1906

OLD WASHINGTON

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MISS Veronica Sidney and her sister Sedley.

A THANKSGIVING BREAKFAST. Frontispiece.

OLD WASHINGTON

BY
HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD

Author of

"THE AMBER GODS," "IN TITIAN'S GARDEN AND OTHER POEMS,"
"HESTER STANLEY AT ST. MARK'S," ETC.



*With a Frontispiece from a Drawing
By George Alfred Williams*

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I

A Thanksgiving Breakfast

A Thanksgiving Breakfast

PERHAPS you remember the house, a little remote from the Avenue and its approaches, in that part of the town which is now the fashionable centre, but was then on the edge of a wood, a house sitting high on its terraces, half covered with honeysuckles green all winter, and half hidden by its hedges.

Here Miss Veronica and her sister lived, intrenched not only behind their hedges, but behind a respectability that took small note of new people and affairs ; and as some trees find sustenance in the decay of their roots, they nourished themselves upon past grandeur. Administrations came and administrations went ; they passed like ephemera before Miss Veronica and Miss Sedley. In forty years they had not thought it worth while to attend a President's levee, or to enter the White House at all. The Capitol had blown up the bubble of its mighty dome

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unvisited by them. The Civil War had surged over the country, scarcely causing them a heart-throb. When Early made his raid upon the borders of the town they only smiled to hear of it; they were Southern ladies, and safe in any event. Soldiers marched and countermarched in street and avenue—they only bowed their blinds and sat farther back in their parlors. Milly and Hark became free people; the country rocked with jubilation and blazed with banners; so far as they were conscious of it they regarded it as a part of the latter-day ruin. A President was impeached; it did not signify; the new Presidents were like children playing with crowns and sceptres. As nearly as possible time and the march of nations stood still that Miss Veronica Sidney and her sister Sedley might pass, pausing, if not with that President who had been an uncle-in-law of some long dead aunt of theirs, yet with his immediate successors.

The income of these old gentlewomen was very small, consisting of the rents of certain houses, sometimes paid and sometimes not, and it was now smaller than ever,

A THANKSGIVING BREAKFAST

since under the new system of street improvement some of the houses had simply been swallowed in the abyss of the betterments. But their needs were very small also. They changed the fashion of their garments but little ; one wax candle burned a long while ; and the best part of the table was its thin old silver. The Easter ham, stuffed with chives and shallots, lasted them almost to Ascension ; and there was some of the Christmas pudding left not only for Twelfth-night but for Candlemas. They paid wages now to Milly, small ones, but none at all to Hark, who waited at table and on the door, and had his satisfaction in it ; and the two old slaves, beaming and content, said nothing about the fact that they were much better off than their mistresses, having long ago squatted on some vacant lots, and having now sold out for an independence. Milly went home every evening, and came back every morning as Miss Veronica opened the door to go out to six o'clock mass, for the sisters were devout Catholics. And with Milly came half a dozen little pickaninnies in every

size and shade, who played all day on the brick floor of the great kitchen or in the area behind it, and who were fed at no particular cost on potatoes and gravy. Hark did the marketing and whatever might become a man ; and if now and then dainties in the shape of an early radish or a crisp lettuce, a shaddock dressed with sherry, a devilled crab, a bird, appeared on the table, the ladies only thought how apt Hark was at getting the money's worth, and never dreamed that it was Hark's money.

So Miss Veronica's and Miss Sedley's days went by in a great quiet. They had a few friends, somewhat like themselves, with whom they exchanged visits. They occasionally went over to the convent and got the news of the world. They now and then read a newspaper, but with the air of holding it with a pair of tongs. They regarded a woman who wrote for the papers as false to her sex ; an interviewer was something less reprehensible than a housebreaker perhaps ; and they associated suffrage in their minds with divorce, and regarded them both as scandals, for mention of which, were

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it necessary to allude to them, you lowered your voice. Their contempt for the North, its fasts and feasts and people, was inbred, but was not active, the subject being too remote to concern them. They looked askance at the employment of women in the Treasury; and they took almost as much care not to brush their skirts against a Treasury girl as against a play-actress, as they called it—a person who represented to them an unknown quantity, not exactly human, but allied to the powers of evil. And as for modern science, so far as they knew anything about it, it was a fairy story, or a lure of the devil, and they regarded mention of protoplasm or germs or evolution as uncomfortably near profanity. They did endless cross-stitch with crewels on canvas, and some beautiful tambour-work on muslin. They had a week of dissipation when one of the Fairs of their Church took place; and they would revel in half the bad passions of the race over the countless raffles for a picture, an India shawl, a lace mantle, there. When Miss Sedley broke her arm, Miss Veronica kept the bandages wet with

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holy water, and was confident that the dressing did more good than the surgeon's splints. And Miss Sedley had for some time been putting by a secret hoard, if by possibility it might reach such proportions that Miss Veronica could make the pilgrimage to Lourdes, not very long known then, and wash away the little knobs that were coming on the joints of her long white slender fingers.

So, neither of the world nor in the world, they sat one summer morning, now and then murmuring a sentence or two, wearing their old sheer muslin gowns, a little open at the ruffled throat, a faint color from the heat upon their withered cheeks, the slightly loose and thin gray hair having the fine curl about the brow which belongs alike to age and infancy, — as beautiful, alas! as it is given to old women to be. And they slowly waved their great feather fans, more with a sense of the terrible heat that struck up from the blazing concrete pavements outside, than with any actual experience of it here where the south wind blew in at the windows and brought with it the sweetness

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of the roses that bent their long stems and swung damask and maroon and blush and white, such heavy hundred-leaved roses as summer seldom gives the North. Miss Sedley had yawned and yawned again. "Dear, dear," she said. "It does seem as if life were too empty to live. One day just like another, and nothing ever happening."

"Sometimes it seems to me," said Miss Veronica, "as if we were our own ghosts," and then she stopped, overcome with the irreverence of the fancy. "I mean we are really so dead, not merely dead and alive, but dead. There is nothing that could happen."

"Oh, sister!"

"There is no one to come. And no one to go. Nothing to hope for. Nothing to wish. There *are* old people who amount to something. But I reckon they married, or their sisters did —"

"Yes, oh, yes!"

"If we only had some one to love, Sedley, I would not care how worthless — it would be better than stagnation."

"Oh, sister!"

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“I’ve always been tolerably content, you know,” said Miss Veronica, taking the little powder-puff from the reticule on her arm and cooling her face with it, “but lately I have thought we might as well be dead and done with as done with and not dead!”

“I’m afraid it is very irreligious. I feel so, too. I’m afraid perhaps we’ve been living too well. It has puffed us up and made us discontented. I’m afraid I would better tell Milly,” said Miss Sedley, “not to put caraway into the next seed-cakes.”

Perhaps the sisters were dozing then, the briefest moment possible, when a blow from the knocker resounded through the hall, and resounded again with determination, before Hark could loiter up from the kitchen and shuffle along to the door.

“Oh, my goodness!” cried Miss Sedley. “To think of any one out in this heat! Who do you suppose it can be? Perhaps it is Mrs. Entwisle’s Polly about the gooseberries. You don’t think it can be Father Walter? I wish the sherbet — Oh — ah — yes — no — I’m sure —” For Hark was taking an impression of his thumb on a

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visiting-card, and Miss Veronica had slowly adjusted her lorgnon and read

MISS CELESTE DREER

The Graphic
The Free Press

without, however, observing the lower left-hand corner, and had passed the card to her sister.

“Dreer?” she said. “Dreer? There were the Yardley Dreers, and the Queen Anne County Dreers — well, well — Yes, Hark, of course we shall be pleased.” And then a young lady in a frou-frou of light summer silk and a hat of corn-flowers and poppies was in the room and bending with a pretty grace to the old ladies, opening a fan that swung at her waist, taking the seat they both indicated at the same moment, a pair of keen quick eyes busying themselves with the environment.

“No,” she said in bright, crisp tones. “I’m so sorry. But I’m neither the Yardley nor the Queen Anne Dreers. I’m just a no-account Dreer. But when I was quite a little girl old Chancellor Babb used to tell me of you —”

“The Chancellor ! Indeed ! It is so long since —”

“And my kind friend, General Fitz Hardee —”

“Oh, certainly, any friend of General Fitz Hardee !”

“And so I am venturing, — although it is so unceremonious, — and I am awfully afraid a thunder-gust is coming up.”

And by this time the lively eyes had taken in the lofty old-fashioned room, where the Canton mattings diffused their odor of dates ; where Windsor chairs stood between white dimity-covered sofas ; bright Lowes-toft china illuminated dark wall-cabinets ; spidery tables held jars of pot-pourri and great bowls of fresh roses and one or two faded silken-bound Souvenirs and Annuals ; where a spindle-legged piano, whose ivory inlay was yellow as old paper, companioned a harp over whose strings and tarnished gilding she could in an instant see Miss Sedley drooping the flaxen ringlets and curving the round white arms of long ago ; and where half-guessed in the shadow and the dimness the portraits of gentlemen in gold lace, and

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of ladies in long corsets and scarfs and feathers, looked down from the walls among century-old engravings framed in black and bearing long-descended stains.

“Oh, we do not mind the thunder-gusts,” said Miss Veronica.

“I do, then,” said the visitor. “I grow stone-cold, and have to have something warm to drink, and nearly die with fright anyway. But I had to come. You know after Congress is gone and there’s nothing doing at the Departments or in society, there’s so little to write about, and —”

“You want to tell them at home that you have seen their old friends,” said Miss Sedley.

“Oh, dear, no! nothing of the sort. — You must excuse my saying so, but what a perfectly charming room this is! Who would think, down in Mrs. McQueen’s stuffy boarding-house, that such a cool bowery place of seclusion could be found in the same town? You can never know anything about the heat, here. Why, some nights I just gasp for breath. We take our chairs out on the sidewalk after dark and simply suffer. I

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went to sleep last summer for six weeks with the thermometer at a hundred and two, and it was ninety-eight when I woke up. In the daytime it was hotter after a shower than it was before. I held my parasol down coming up here, for the heat from the pavement was worse than the heat from the sky. Oh, it is so deliciously cool in here !” And she stopped talking long enough to use her fan vigorously.

“We were thinking it warm,” said Miss Veronica.

“In this place ! Why, it belongs to the Dwelling of Delightful Days ! It is ages ago here, but without the dust of ages. Oh, it is fine to have your grandmothers’ old low-boys when you don’t have to have your grandmothers’ old cobwebs too ! And will you really let me see the things you have that belonged to the President ? What treasures ! oh, what treasures !”

And Miss Veronica and Miss Sedley were as wax in the hands of this young business woman ; and the gold-embroidered waist-coat, and the Malines lace ruffles, and the gold snuff-box, and the order given by the

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King of Spain, and the diary kept at sea, and the sleeve-links and the mourning-ring and the paste knee-buckles, and the lock of his hair, passed processionally before her.

“And this work-box,” said Miss Veronica at last, “was once the property of Queen Marie Antoinette.”

“That !”

Miss Sedley bridled. “Perhaps you have not examined it,” she said. “It is ebony and niello-work.”

“I beg your pardon. I ’m right glad you told me. I thought it was just bits of woodcuts, you know, laid on the black wood and varnished over, like mamma used to do.”

“The i-dea !” said Miss Sedley. “It came from the Little Trianon. There is her thimble with the topaz top ; there is the bit of lace and lawn she was beginning — See where the needle was stuck in hurriedly as she laid it down. There is a tiny blood-spot where she pricked her finger —”

“Oh, the poor lovely creature ! the poor, great, sweet martyr ! Oh, Miss Sidney, if you would let me touch it !” And she lifted

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it over the tip of her finger, and suddenly pressed her lips upon the tiny spot and held it to her glowing cheek.

“You dear child! You dear girl!” cried Miss Veronica. “How susceptible you are! We should not have shown it to you. We —”

“Oh, yes, yes! You have given me such a pleasure! It has been such an experience!”

And at that Miss Sedley had gone upstairs and brought down a gown in which some one had danced with Aaron Burr, two breadths and a gore of a brocade whose delicate rose tints and multitudinous yellowing ribbons would not have been unbecoming to either of the gentle ladies then. “Now,” said Miss Sedley, when this also had been sufficiently admired, “I think we really must have some sherbet, sister. Shall I speak to Hark?” And while Miss Veronica was telling the adventures of that dance, Celeste was eating cherry ice with a little thin gold apostle-spoon, and wondering how these people lived cut off from the present; and if they really were alive; and were she

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once outside could she ever find the house again; and if she could remember half that she had seen and heard. And she walked home almost as well pleased with herself as she was when, some ten days afterward, she again stood at the door with the slip of newspaper containing the letter in which she had described the place, the house, the treasures, and the ladies themselves.

She received, as she expected, the most cordial welcome. The sweet old ladies — Miss Veronica tall and slender, Miss Sedley not so tall and not so slender, in their soft muslin gowns, with their great feather fans, and the faint flush of the heat on their cheeks — seemed to have been sitting in the same spot since she left them. “I declare,” she said afterwards, “I wanted to pinch myself to make sure it was n’t some absurd enchantment, or I was n’t dreaming, or something.” But she only waved her own fan and unfolded the slip of newspaper.

“Now,” she said gayly, “it is my turn. I have brought you something. And I do hope it will give you the pleasure to read it that it did me to write it!”

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Miss Veronica and Miss Sedley Sidney bent their heads together over the slip of paper she handed them. She had cut off the scare-heads, because she had not been responsible for them, and would not have had them — “Two Ancient Beauties of the District,” “Butterflies in Amber,” “Links with Aaron Burr” — and the letter itself she knew was not half bad. She had taken off her hat at their request, they a little flattered that youth had found them pleasant enough to come back so soon, and she sat with a smile on her face expectant of the smile on theirs.

“Oh!” she suddenly heard Miss Veronica exclaim, like a cry of pain; “it is impossible!”

“Oh!” Miss Sedley echoed her sister. “I cannot believe it.”

The faint blush on their faces grew a deep scarlet, their eyes were staring wide and frightened, their lips trembled, their hands trembled.

“I cannot read it,” stammered Miss Veronica. “I—I—have never been so insulted in my life.”

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“So outraged,” whispered Miss Sedley.

“So humiliated!”

“I don’t know what you mean!” cried Celeste, her cheeks blazing. “Do you —”

“Oh!” exclaimed Miss Veronica, looking at her a moment with burning eyes. “We do not mean anything. Only please to go away.”

“But I don’t understand,” urged Celeste. “Have n’t I said enough? Have I made a mistake? Is there anything wrong?”

“Oh, it is all wrong!” cried Miss Sedley.

“All wrong?” Celeste repeated tremulously.

“Oh, cruel! Wrong and cruel!”

“Wrong and cruel! Why, there must be — You can’t — I don’t see —”

“You don’t see,” exclaimed Miss Veronica, “that you have come into our quiet lives and stripped them bare, and let in the glare as if I threw that blind open to the sun? That you have violated our hospitality —”

“Our welcome.”

“Our friendliness,” the slip of paper shaking in the knobby fingers.

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“Our confidence.”

“That you have betrayed us, exposed us. Oh, we shall not dare to be seen upon the street —”

“To show our faces!”

“I — I thought you would be pleased,” faltered Celeste.

“Pleased! Pleased to be held up as a show; to be bandied about the crowd; to be vulgarized; to be in the mouth of people as if we were criminals; to be — to be profaned —”

“And we have lived such quiet lives, — so respectable,” said Miss Sedley, her lips quivering again. “And now our modesty, our decency —”

“Oh, don’t, don’t, don’t!” cried Celeste, springing up with her hands upon her eyes, from which the tears were spurting. “How could I tell? Every one else has liked it. People have offered me money to do it. It is my livelihood. I get enough from my papers to pay a week’s board for the letter —”

“A reporter!”

“But, oh! I would never, never have

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done it if I had thought you felt this way. I don't understand now. I don't see why. Oh, I liked you so! You were so sweet to me. I never saw any one I felt so near to all at once. And now — Oh, you are breaking my heart!" And her voice had risen almost to a scream, and she had thrown herself on her knees beside Miss Veronica, and buried her face in the lady's lap, sobbing bitterly.

"I am glad you feel so," said Miss Sedley. "It is something to have you see what you have done."

"Oh, oh!" she cried, lifting her hot wet face. "It is n't any matter about me. Oh, I am so sorry I did it, when you feel so! I could n't know — I never dreamed — oh! oh! oh!" And she cried so that Miss Veronica, who at first had shrunk away, put out her hand and laid it on her hair. But the sobs only grew wilder, more uncontrollable, and convulsive.

"Really," said Miss Veronica, "you must n't. Indeed you must n't. I — I did n't know you were so sensitive — I am sure —"

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“Please don’t feel so,” prayed Miss Sedley. “Oh, please! I forgive you. We forgive you. Oh, do get up! You will make yourself ill!” And then it became evident that they had something more on their hands than they could manage. The thunder that had been growling in the sky for some minutes burst in a sudden clap. Miss Veronica reached for her smelling-salts; and Miss Sedley remembered and hastened for something warm to drink; and Celeste, vainly trying to swallow her sobs and stay her tears, toppled over white and stiff; and Hark and Milly came and carried her upstairs; and Miss Sedley herself put her to bed in the room in the wing with the southern exposure and the gallery, and sent for Dr. John. “I don’t know but we have killed her,” she whispered over and over to Miss Veronica.

“The fact is,” said Dr. John on taking leave, “that she is about used up, and this was bound to come. She’s the most hard-working little thing in town. Every morning up at the Capitol, into the Departments, over at the White House, down

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to the printing-offices, every afternoon at the receptions, and every night reporting a dinner or a ball, and hunting out new facts to write about betweenwhiles."

"Oh, my goodness, doctor! What for?"

"For the news of the world. And she has a high standard for the honor of her profession, and will run all over town to verify an item, about a ribbon, maybe. I told her she would break down the last time she had one of these attacks. It would wear out a man of brass, to say nothing of a little Southern girl brought up on eider-down. And just now she seems to have had a shock. How in the world came she here?" And he looked about him quizzically.

"Oh, she has! She has had a shock!" cried Miss Sedley. "And it's our fault! I don't know but we have killed her. You must, you must bring her round, doctor. Your father could, and you can,"—with the implicit confidence that every one had in Dr. John as the dispenser of life and death—"and we will spare no pains." And the two poor ladies forgot all about the sin of the sufferer, forgot the heat and their

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delicate old toilettes, and bathed the girl, and rubbed her, and fed her, and watched over her day and night.

“It is quite worth the effort,” said Miss Sedley, coming down into the drawing-room, where, after three or four days of anxiety, Miss Veronica was drawing a free breath. “The beautiful young creature — so finely bred! How she came to be working like she does — that sort of work — I reckon she has n’t any mother. You can see she’s a lady to the tips of her fingers. You can see it,” said Miss Sedley in a whisper, “by her underclothes.”

“How pretty she is, lying there so white in all the heat! Oh, how I should like a daughter like that —”

“Veronica!”

“I should! Indeed, indeedy! But, there —”

“The indelicacy!”

“I don’t care anything about the indelicacy,” said Miss Veronica, recklessly. “I should have liked the daughter. I would have taken better care of her, too, I reckon —”

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“She told me she was in the Treasury once, sister.” Veronica deserved some reproof, and should have the undiluted fact.

“In the Treasury.”

“Sedley !”

“And she seemed to think it a misfortune to have lost the place.”

“Oh !” shuddered Miss Veronica. “Do not let us think of it any more.” And she went out to the pantry and poured a little rose-water into the palms of her hands, as if she were cleansing herself, and Celeste too, of a stain. Then they took up their great feather fans again with fresh enjoyment, for Celeste was resting sweetly upstairs, watched by the young friend for whom she had begged them to send, saying Jinny had no engagement now, and would be glad to come and relieve them.

“It is dreadful, my giving you such trouble,” Celeste had sighed. “And bringing two people in upon you ! It only shows what saints and angels you are.”

“Oh, we have grown so fond of you, my child !”

“Then you will call me Celeste. I sha’n’t

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think you've forgiven me till you call me Celeste."

"We have forgotten all about forgiving. It was an accident, a misunderstanding. You will forget it too, dear — I mean — Celeste."

They had scarcely composed themselves with their fans when there came a series of imperious blows of the knocker, and they heard the prancing of horses down at the gate.

"Why does n't Hark hurry?" exclaimed Miss Sedley, with the consciousness that such a summons should be answered at once, and slipping down the hall herself. "Hark, where's this you're at? Don't you hear the door?" she cried. And then Hark brought in the cards of the Russian Minister and the inquiries of Madame the Princess for Miss Dreer. And directly afterward there came another boom of the knocker, and there was a basket of flowers from the White House. And the news of Miss Dreer's sickness having spread, as news spreads nowhere else with more rapidity, cards from the British Embassy and from

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the German, and the personal inquiry of more than one of the South American Ministers, and the cards of the Boynewaters, and of Madame D'Arco and Miss Campeador, followed all the week with flowers and fruits and wine from these just leaving for the summer in Europe, and those for Newport and the North.

"I feel like I had changed my identity," said Miss Sedley.

"Because some foreign officials have left cards on our guests?" said Miss Veronica, with dignity.

"We have been out of the world so long."

"We never were in it personally, except by family tradition."

"I hope it won't keep Mrs. Entwisle away."

"It seems absurd, when we hardly know where next month's dinners are coming from," replacing in its envelope the bill she had just received. "We shall have to sell the G Street house now; this charge for the betterment is more than it is worth. It is perfectly infamous. But," with a helpless sigh, "they have everything their own way.

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There is only the place across the Avenue left."

"Sister — why could n't we keep Celeste here? She has to pay her board elsewhere, — she said something about a Mrs. McQueen's — and she may as well pay it to us —"

"Pay us board!" said Miss Veronica.

"She would n't stay if she did n't, you know. And that dear little creature that is taking care of her — I don't know why I call her little; she's taller than I am, but she's a dear. She's so sweet and bright. I really don't know which I love the best. And that Miss Constantia Gilroy, who —"

"Looks just like a white lily. The Gilroys are one of the great families of —"

"And that other engaging girl that comes to see them, Raleigh Cumnor —"

"She certainly is refinement and grace itself. I wonder —"

"And just see what a difference it makes with us already! When I heard them all three laughing together this morning, oh, I felt forty years younger!"

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“If we were only able to keep open house —”

And then there was a rustle in the hall where two pairs of slippered feet had been creeping down the stairs.

“I heard you!” cried Celeste, gayly. “I heard you! Oh, if you only would! We would be so well behaved —”

“Celeste! You here? Oh, my dear, is n’t this imprudent? That is right, Miss Jinny, the pillows. There, dear, lie right down,” said the two ladies together, bustling about one of the sofas.

“I feel so nicely,” said Celeste, “I could n’t have the face to stay upstairs any more. It’s been an imposition anyway. And I really think we must go home, unless you were in earnest just now and would let us stay that way. You know we could n’t stay and be a burden — if we did n’t do just as we do down at Mrs. McQueen’s. And it would be the kindest, loveliest, and most Christian act, giving homes to two homeless girls, which the most they could pay would n’t half pay for —”

“Oh, sister,” cried Miss Sedley, “it seems

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too good to be true—to keep these dear things all the time! You will say Yes?”

“Sedley, if you will promise not to shed a tear. We can’t have Celeste excited one atom. Yes, you shall send for your trunks, my dears. And if you like the home it shall be yours while it is ours.” And Celeste, who could not be excited, tottered up from the sofa and fell upon their necks, with an arm round each, in a passion of tears and kisses.

“To think of having a home!” she cried. “And such a home! And with you! Oh, Jinny, does n’t it seem as if we had gone to heaven! And, oh, it is really—really too hot for heroics!”

It was several days after Jinny had brought up and disposed their worldly belongings, and a feeling of peace and bliss, a sense of youth and cheer, had settled over the household, that Miss Sedley brought to Celeste’s sofa a number of the cards that had been left during her illness. They had been sitting in the moonlight, while the night fragrances of the garden rolled in softly all about them,

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and the candles had been but a little while lighted.

“‘Señor and Madame Castilla,’” read Celeste. “Yes. I’ve been a very good friend of theirs. And they know it.”

“You!” said Miss Veronica, as if she had heard the mouse boast in relation to the lion.

“Oh, yes. You know, I have written a good deal about both of them. In Europe the censorship of the press gives importance to every item; and if anything really is in the paper they feel there that it means something. And so all I have said about them—they cut out every scrap and sent it home—counted for more than it was worth. And when they were going away—you know they were promoted to another mission, and he was made a Grand Panjandrum or something—she sent for me and told me all this, and gave me that,” and she held out her hand with its ring of sapphires and diamonds.

“It—it seems impossible,” murmured Miss Sedley, under her breath.

“But, my love,” said Miss Veronica,

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“because they like flattery, it does n’t make the business — the dealing in personality — any less reprehensible.”

“Sister!”

“Well, dear, perhaps not,” said Celeste, “when you show me that it is reprehensible. People want it, at any rate; and people will have what they want; and if I don’t give it to them another will.”

“You might say that of any disgraceful business.”

“But it is n’t disgraceful,” said Celeste, coaxingly. “You need a great deal of enlightenment. I describe the inside of a beautiful home; it shows them far in the wilderness how to have a beautiful home. I describe a fine lady; women all over the country can be fine ladies on that model. I tell the social happenings; and I don’t know that they are not as much to the purpose really as the political happenings. I’m sure they’re a great deal pleasanter. Just look at this place before they had telegraphs and reporters and correspondents and interviewers — ”

“Oh, yes, how perfect, how lovely it was!”

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“You dear little innocent angels! Well, we let a flood of light in. And men can’t do now as they did then—without being found out, you know. Oh, yes, and here are the Russian Embassy cards again. How good it was to send their carriage for us to take the air!”

“It made me feel like an adventuress, driving out in state with imperial arms on the carriage door,” said Miss Veronica.

“I don’t know,” said Miss Sedley. “I reckon I enjoyed it. Although I was a little afraid of the men servants.

“Well, you saw what a splendid city they are making of it —”

“At our expense.”

“And there never was a sweeter sight in that carriage,” said Miss Jinny, “than your two dear aristocratic faces.”

“Oh, but the Princess herself is beautiful,” said Celeste. “I wish you had seen her leaving her box, with her velvet and ermine cloak falling about her, and the long thick braid of her fair hair down one side to her knee. ‘A daughter of the gods, divinely tall, and most divinely fair.’ Don’t you

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remember, Jinny dear? It was the night you made your hit in *Cinderella Afterwards*, and the house came down, and you thought they were applauding the beautiful Princess, and that made them go wild with applauding you again, and all the diplomats and the little attachés stood up and shouted, and the stage was half covered with flowers for you — ”

“The stage!” exclaimed two startled voices.

“Why, yes; the stage of the National, where she had her last engagement. And she had the offer of an engagement from a New York manager the very next day but one, and she refused it, the little goose, so that she might stay on at the National till it closed, and be with me at Mrs. McQueen’s and get her things ready to marry Jerome, when, if she’d kept on, she might be one of the great actresses — ”

“An actress!”

“She’s a very good one as it is. Oh, she can make you laugh, and she can make you cry, and her dancing is — ”

“A dancer!”

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Miss Veronica was as white as death. Miss Sedley was secretly, but involuntarily, crossing herself.

“Oh, that I should live to see the day!” one murmured.

“Merciful Mother!” moaned the other.

“Miss Veronica! Dear Miss Sedley! What is it?” cried the girls, springing toward them. “What is the matter?”

“Oh!” Miss Sedley was whispering. “I must see Father Walter.”

But Miss Veronica waved them off, gathering her skirts away. “In our house!” she exclaimed. “In our mother’s drawing-room! The pollution of it!”

“What, what, Miss Sidney!”

“An actress!” and Miss Veronica’s tones were unmistakable.

“Oh!” And both the girls fell back. But in a moment Celeste had thrown her arms round Jinny, who had begun to cry.

“Didn’t you know she was an actress?” she exclaimed to the two horrified ladies. “I thought every one knew it. And what of it? Most of the people here would think it an honor to have her in their houses. An

actress, indeed! Virginia Cantrell is just as good as I am, and a great deal better, for she is a genius, too, and she is the soul of honor and uprightness. She is just as good as you are! She is better!" cried the infuriated Celeste. "For she does n't keep out of the way of the world for fear of being contaminated, but she is in the world, doing her duty with the talent God gave her, and not contaminated by it. And you had better ask Father White about her, and he'll tell you she's as true a Catholic as you are. You run right upstairs and pack your trunk, Jinny, and I'll pack mine. I would n't stay another night in this house for money! I thought it was too good to be true — our having such a pleasant home," and here Celeste began to cry, "with two angels — narrow-minded angels — but angels all the same. Live creatures sweeping by on the current — could n't live with barnacles —"

Was Jinny acting? It crossed Miss Veronica's mind that here was more desecration of the drawing-room with its portraits and spider-legged tables and jars of pot-pourri packed by dear fingers a half-hundred

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years ago and more. And then she felt as if her heart were a millstone that would sink her into a bottomless pit. She instinctively put her hand in her reticule for the companionship of her little rosary.

For Jinny had left Celeste, and was approaching her with outstretched arms. "Miss Sidney," she said, "you're not going to send me away for that? You *don't* think there is any harm in me? You can't tell what it has been to me to think I had this resting-place. I should have played so much better if I had always had such a support behind me. And, indeed, I can't think what you mean. I never did anything you need be ashamed of if you were my own mother."

The candles only made darkness visible in the long room round the little spot near Celeste. But the moonlight streamed through the window and bathed the girl in a white glow — so tender, so appealing, so innocent — No, no, only a play actress! Miss Veronica lifted her open hand as if warding off a great terror or a bitter draught, and turned her head aside. "It is very late," she said hoarsely. "We will not talk

any more. Please go to bed." And as she stood up there was an air of gentle authority about her that was not to be disobeyed.

"Oh!" cried Celeste, as she hurried by her, following Jinny. "I've no doubt you will go to heaven, you are so good. But how surprised you will be when you get there to find Jinny nearer to God than you are!"

Miss Veronica put out the candles, and looked round for her sister. But Miss Sedley had gone too. She sank into the arm-chair by the hearth that Celeste had filled with ferns from Kalorama, forgetting to close the windows through which the summer night breeze still rolled heavy with perfumes into the moonlighted place. She was entirely bewildered, weak and faint with her mental confusion. She did not know whether she had suffered a degradation, her mother's parlor a desecration, or whether she must reverse the opinions, the prejudices of a lifetime. Why had all this oversetting come to her? Why had she been suffered to grow fond of this young actress—the word made her shiver; why had it not been

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that Miss Gilroy, who looked as if she were carved out of a pearl, who had come more than once to inquire for Celeste, or that pretty Raleigh Cumnor, Celeste's other friend, who ran in every day and made the house gay with laughter? She had a warm feeling for that child the moment she saw her — old General Cumnor's daughter they called her. There had been a time when Tom Cumnor — However, all that was in the golden age. And these were dark days. She was cold in all the warm night, filled with a sort of vague horror of she knew not what. Perhaps she fell asleep; she did not know; but certainly the broad moonbeam had come round and fallen full upon her mother's portrait, lighting the wistful eyes and the sweet mouth there; had slowly shifted and lain across the picture in the panel and silvered it with a glory — an old print of the Shepherd with the stray lamb in His arms, and with the gaze of unspeakable tenderness in His eyes, the gaze bent full on her and seeming to search her soul. If she were in the body or out of it, Miss Veronica could not have told, only for an

instant her soul was bared to her own gaze. And then the moonlight passed, and she was shivering like one alone in a wide black desert, and felt suddenly, with a sense of infinite relief, the warmth of two young arms about her neck, and heard Jinny saying: "Oh, you must n't be afraid of me. I truly am not bad. Dear, I can't have you sitting up down here alone. Don't you fret—I am going away of my own accord. Poor Miss Veronica, you must go to bed or you'll be ill." And she had reached up her arms and drawn the girl down into her lap and hidden her old face in her breast.

And directly afterward there was a swish of drapery and patter of feet on the matting. "Oh, sister! sister!" sobbed Miss Sedley. "You know the world moves, and we must move with it. And our mother used to say we were n't here to judge but to help. And if we love our Lord, we must do the work of our Lord. And Celeste feels so badly that she spoke so! And if they're not good, we must make them good. And they are—oh, they're every whit as good as—as any

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one!" Just then the mocking-birds hanging in their cages outside the windows of the next street suddenly burst into their wild night-song; and with their arms round one another the four happy people had a beautiful time crying together.

The air next morning was like air purified by a thunder-storm passing through it. When Raleigh Cumnor stopped to ask if Celeste had a letter for her to post, Miss Veronica's prepossessions gave their last flicker.

"It's too bad to be bound to a desk in the Treasury when you would like to be flying down the Potomac on the *Arrow*," said Raleigh.

"Tom Cumnor's daughter in the Treasury!" exclaimed Miss Veronica.

"And mighty glad to be there," said Raleigh. "At least in general, you know. Just for this moment, perhaps, I would prefer being a bird out in the Rock Creek woods, or a young colt rolling on the flowers of the high-field up where we used to live in the Virginia hills."

"I wish you would take me down to the

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Treasury some day, Raleigh," said Miss Veronica, meekly. "I should like to see —"

"Oh, come now!" cried Raleigh, "before it is any warmer. I will show you all over it—the beautiful cash-room and the great vaults full of gold. And you shall see them printing new greenbacks upstairs and counting old ones downstairs—enough to make you despise money, though I don't know how you could despise it any more than you do."

"I've had such a delightful morning," said Miss Veronica, when she came home, and Jinny had taken her bonnet and parasol, and she sat sipping the iced buttermilk that Celeste brought her, while Miss Sedley had her clabber and cream. "And it seems to me as if the Treasury were fairly peopled with ghosts. I've seen the sisters and wives and widows and daughters of half the people we used to know in the old days, that had dropped out of the great world —"

"Into the greater world," said Celeste.

"Why, it's our Faubourg St. Germain! And, Sedley, you must go down yourself.

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We really must make a business of acquainting ourselves with affairs — ”

“ I don’t know how Father Walter — ”

“ No one would like it better than that noble, comforting spirit. I feel as if we had been asleep while things were growing. You’ve no idea what a country it is! I am going to the Patent Office to-morrow, and then — Who is that ? ” For a young man was mounting the terrace two steps at a time.

“ I must break it to you gently,” said Celeste, laughing, but catching her disengaged hand, with its little thready rings. “ It is Jinny’s Jerome. And he is a New-Englander ! ”

But Miss Veronica rose to the occasion. “ I suppose he is also an American,” she said.

“ He is a scientific man. And he has — discovered a germ.”

“ Perhaps it was n’t his fault,” said Miss Veronica.

“ I hope it is n’t unfeminine,” said Miss Sedley to her sister one night some weeks afterward, when Celeste had gone upstairs

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to finish her *Graphic* letter, and Jinny had gone down to the gate with her lover, "but I must say it is pleasant to have a man going and coming about the house. It — it makes you feel as if you were alive, and not shut off from the world. It makes you feel as if you belonged to the race. It really makes you feel as if, after all, you weren't set away on a shelf to mould. It's natural to have a man about the house. We've been living an unnatural life."

"I don't know how we could have helped it," said Miss Veronica.

"Well, it can't last long," said Miss Sedley, pensively. "He'll take her away presently. But there's this about it: he'll be coming back to attend to that bill of his in the winter. It's a serious matter with him, Celeste says, to carry that bill."

"Then he must carry it," said Miss Veronica. "Let me see," she said, after a pause in which she was lost in thought, "isn't there a senator by the name of Sumner? I thought there was. He was very wrong on the slavery question, wasn't he? Well, bygones are bygones. And he

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is interested in old prints and medals, some one said. And" — here she lowered her voice — "is n't — is n't — is n't Butler in the House — do you say? I shall go to see him. Oh, yes, oh, yes, I shall. I shall present the case. He must be a power. And — let me see," she said again, with her finger on her lips, "who are our own senators?"

"We haven't any, you know," said Miss Sedley, bitterly. "They are all — what is it they call them? — carpet-baggers."

"Very well. Carpet-baggers will want the countenance of the old gentility. I shall see them all." And although her heart was shaking and her voice was trembling, the gentle old lady, who had never yet dared stop a street car by herself, was already lobbying Jerome's bill through Congress for all she was worth.

Miss Sedley glanced at the portraits on the wall with an air of apprehension. But the personage in knee-breeches and a powdered wig, with the sword at his side, the roll of parchment in his hand, and the red curtain and the thunder-storm behind him,

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continued looking over her head in sublime unconcern; and as for the wax medallions in their tarnished frames, the lady there in low relief, with a high comb and an eye askew, and the gentleman with a stiff stock and a bang, went on gazing at each other with stolid indifference to the affairs of a lesser world than theirs. But the glance somehow reassured Miss Sedley. Whatever new scenes shifted across the view, the globe still moved on the same axis.

It was in the mild and beautiful November weather, when all the blue river distances were swathed with sun-gilded hazes, the late roses were still blooming, and the bland Indian summer was sweeter than ever real summer was, that Miss Veronica sat at the head of her table, one morning, ready to carve a Potomac swan. "My dears," she said to the bride and groom on her either hand — when, after a nuptial mass, they had come home to a Thanksgiving breakfast, before leaving for Jerome's home in Hillburn, while Celeste, and Raleigh, that lovely Connie Gilroy and Miss Sedley assisted, the latter resplendent in an adapta-

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tion of the Aaron Burr brocade which Jinny had made without injuring it — “my dears, it is not especially a festival of our Church, and it is not a festival of our part of the country, at least it used not to be — I don’t know that we ever kept the day before, Sedley? But I feel as if I could not sufficiently honor it and express my thanks to-day for the goodness which, against our will, has taken us out of the clefts of the rock and into the living currents by overturning our prejudices and enlightening our ignorance.”

“You mean by giving us all these young people, sister,” regardless of the spot made by every falling tear.

“Yes, these poor young people who never can know any such pleasure as ours, unless when they shall be old and sad and lonely and —”

“And tired to death of life as it was, sister.”

“They shall have young blood poured into their veins as we have had, young eyes given them to see the world, young voices to put them in tune with it —”

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“And young hearts to make them love it!” cried Celeste.

And as they all fell on Miss Veronica and Miss Sedley in turn, the latter, struggling and blushing and rearranging herself, exclaimed: “It’s a sort of new mission field, isn’t it? The mission of Youth to Age. But, oh, Veronica!” she said, “don’t you remember Bettie Brierley, who declared there were four men she would never marry—a preacher, or a Protestant, or a Frenchman, or a widower?”

“And she is the third wife of a French Protestant preacher,” said Miss Veronica, examining her carving-knife. “I dare say she knows a good deal more now than she did then. I suppose you mean how scandalized we should have been a year ago at this Thanksgiving Breakfast.”

II

A Guardian Angel

A Guardian Angel

BEFORE Mrs. McQueen's house — of whose heat Miss Celeste Dreer had complained so bitterly to Miss Veronica and Miss Sedley Sidney — was improved off the face of Fifteenth Street it had an extension in the rear, into the long low upper room of which opened a door on the landing half-way up the front stairs. And although the main house was filled with her boarders, in this extension Mrs. McQueen had her own rooms and a few lodgers who preferred to board themselves, these for reasons of economy, those because Welcker's or Willard's offered them superior attraction. And there, part of the room curtained away for a bed, lodged Mrs. Gilroy and her daughter Connie, the most conspicuous article of their very poor furnishing a great gilded harp, which afforded a singular contrast to the dingy carpet, the calico lounge, the bare walls.

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The Gilroys had come up from the South. But as they never said anything concerning themselves, for a time no one immediately about them knew if the war had ruined their fortunes, or if they had never had any fortunes. It was remembered that the daughter had once been at school at the convent over in Georgetown, and that Sister Blantine had taught her music ; and that was all. They had no influence, no friends, almost no acquaintances. The daughter, with some slight thrill of the instinct of the new generation, had gone to the Representatives of her State and had asked them to procure her a situation under government ; and possibly moved by her wonderful white beauty, they had found her a place in the Printing Bureau, at forty-five dollars a month. She had not far to walk to her work, which at that time had its hot and close quarters directly under the roof of the Treasury Building ; and wrapped in a great apron, she did without a sign of discomposure what once she would hardly have asked of her slaves.

That she had had slaves, Tolly, after her own appearance on the scene, took care that

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every one should know. "She 'ain' neber lif' her han' ter her head," said 'Tolly once to the messenger in the office, "wid a t'ousan' niggers ter say do dis an' dey done do it. Yere, now, honey," opening the little lunch-eon she had brought up from her own kitchen, "yo' ma say yo' pick eb'ry bone. He was crowin' w'en de ball done fall, dat ar birhed was. She say she ain' no way satisfy in regards to yo' appletite to eat, Miss Connie."

But if 'Tolly was communicative, Miss Connie was very silent, making no conversation, prosecuting no acquaintance. It was generally supposed that her silence was an expression of proud unwillingness, and of course it did not render her popular in the office.

But there was a good deal of concern in the house regarding their poor affairs; for it was evident that they had no money, and equally evident that their monthly income could do no more than pay the rent of their room and give them the simplest food. That was the reason that to more than one person in the house besides Mrs. McQueen

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herself, whose tender heart was sore for them, the flapping sound that came every night at about ten o'clock brought something like a startled pang of foreboding. It was Mrs. Gilroy shaking Miss Connie's skirt again and once again out of the window. Carefully then she went over it, picking off every bit of lint, and brushing it daintily as if it were a fairy cobweb. For how in the world, when that was gone, would they ever be able to have another? And every one who heard the sound knew that was the mother's thought; and although several would have been glad to slip the price of a new gown under the door on the landing, yet every one felt it would be inflicting a wound. Indeed, as well offer charity to a princess of the blood as to this cold and unapproachably sweet Miss Constantia Gilroy and her languid mother — a dark and slender little woman, who was only unquenchable spirit and various ganglions of nerves.

Once in a while some of the ladies in the house stepped into Mrs. Gilroy's room for a half-hour's chat in the early evening; sometimes dear little Mrs. McQueen herself; ad-

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mitted perhaps by Tolly, who was usually to be found there then — Mrs. Gilroy's old Tolly on whom she had stumbled in the street. "Dess es grad ter see me es ef de Lawd hed fotch me wid a string — an' so he did, I spec' I reckon. 'Ain' had de misery in my breas' since," said Tolly. "Own folkses de bes' kin' er med'cine, sho 'nuff." Very rarely indeed Mrs. Gilroy and her daughter returned the call. But no one went too often. Even Miss Celeste Dreer, who at first thought to exploit them for copy, felt their condition too keenly to profane it. Tolly, to be sure, came up from her shanty every evening, not able to express sufficiently her contentment at having found her former mistress and the child, whose mammy she had been. The breath of liberty was sweet in Tolly's nostrils; she had a huge regard for her Cassio as a free man, who owned his own mule and tip-cart; even her son, Aby, seemed to her a superior being, having been born free. They were a part of herself. But if to her unspoken fancy Miss Jule had not immortal ichor in her veins, yet she belonged to

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a region somewhere between heaven and earth, and it was Tolly's pride and joy that she was allowed to love her. Moreover, Tolly found washing to do for some of the boarders, and many a good bite, besides, from Mrs. McQueen's table.

But the Gilroys slipped in and out of the house so silently that it seemed as if their concern were only to efface themselves ; as if they would not obtrude upon the recollection of fate, lest they should be dealt fresh blows. Only sometimes, late in the evening, out of the long low room the tones of the harp throbbed full and golden, till one felt as if great wings were sweeping through the house.

At least that is what Jack Knowles felt. And from the first time he heard it, he could never quite dis sever his thought of Connie Gilroy and of some white and lofty princess of a time of fabled story. Poor Connie — tall and fair and stately as ever any princess was, and innocent past belief ; for never any one lived, except Connie's mother, more ignorant of the world of men and the world of books, and, alas ! of almost everything

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else. Poor Connie's mother, too, in whose mind there were but four distinct ideas — that she was a rebel; that to be in society was to be blessed; that Connie was a beauty; that they might lose the office — was as much a child as her daughter, and timid as if the world were a den of lions.

Hélène and Agnes Boynewater had just come over to meet their father, the General, who had, as it chanced, all the first floor of the house and part of the second, and they remembered, as soon as they saw her, that they had been at school with Connie at the Sacred Heart; and they tapped at the door one night, as they heard the harp playing, and made a call, that began with stateliness and ended with a little — a very little — good-fellowship. They made two or three calls before any were returned.

“It's too bad, Hélène,” said Agnes, one night, as she slipped on her new gown. “Connie would be such a beauty in a dress like this. She would like it so! And we could take her as well as not — Mrs. Brownlow is so good-natured. It would be better

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than a play to see her ; it really would. And it would be so nice to give her a glimpse of the world."

"To give the world a glimpse of her."

"I suppose she could have a gown well enough. There's my white crêpe and that box of blue forget-me-nots, and we could have that Miss Dreer report her dress —"

"I don't believe it would do. You see, she couldn't go on with it."

"It would be a great lark."

"Well, anyway, the hair-dresser has gone."

"So she has," said Agnes, ruefully, surveying now in the glass the towering mass of her own curls. "Well, we will run in and ask them if we look all right."

"Oh, no ; it would hurt them."

"Hurt them ! That's all you know of human nature, Hélène Boynewater !"

And although the General's voice rose in intermittent peals of thunder, they ran in, while the carriage waited, their fans in their hands and their cloaks on their arms, for Mrs. Gilroy to tell them whether, if Hélène wore the pearls that had been their mother's,

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Agnes might not wear the little diamond clasps.

“Young ladies used n’t to wear diamonds in my day,” said Mrs. Gilroy, her fingers twinkling rapturously in and out of the bows and puffs, quite in her element, and feeling as if she were going into society herself. “But I just don’t know what they do now, honey.”

“Well, I won’t wear the pearls, either,” said Hélène, as she undid them and tossed the shining string on the lounge.

“Oh, but pearls are mighty different! Indeed, indeedy!” said Mrs. Gilroy.

“They may stay there, may n’t they, Mrs. Gilroy, till I come for them?” she asked.

“Yes, m’am, of course. And you’ll be the belles of the ball, with them or without them! Two such sweet girls! We shall read about you in the *Star* to-morrow.”

And then the gay visions of snowy tulle and long bright ribbon-grasses were flashing down the rest of the stairway, and the pleasant voices were piping, “Yes, yes, papa, here we are!”

And Mrs. Gilroy, staring after them a

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moment, suddenly recovered herself, as if she had been dropped from the sky, and shot the bolt of the door, and turned to Connie with an indescribable air of hopelessness, holding out her arms, much as the loved lady-in-waiting might to a young queen deprived of her queendom.

“Ma, dear,” said Connie, after the moment in which she stood drooping her lovely head over her mother’s, “I don’t really mind.”

Mrs. Gilroy’s sigh was breathed from the very source of tears. To be debarred by poverty from their rights!

“Oh, but I don’t mind at all,” said Connie. “What does it signify, ma, dear, so long as we have each other?”

“Oh, I never thought,” suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Gilroy — “when I went with your pa to the first assembly, and the Governor opened the ball with me, and every one said I was the very picture of a bride — and he was on his way up here, and I was right glad to come with him, and I stood with the White House ladies in the receiving-line — I had a rose-pink taffeta and a

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string of pearls of my own," cried Mrs. Gilroy, forgetting to cry for a moment. "And an Admiral was your godpapa, and so was his wife, and now every one is dead, or gone — I don't know where it is they're at at all" — with fresh tears. "I try — I try — not to cry, — but when I thought you would be cared for like a drop of honey in a flower —"

"I am, ma, dear, I am! You're so good to me — every one is, — and Tolly's such a blessing! Just think of our luck in finding Tolly, and having this place, and this room!"

"Oh, my goodness! Our luck! In being allowed to live!" Then, Mrs. Gilroy's thoughts flashing to another electric point, "And those dear girls!" she cried, as she wiped her eyes. "They did look powerful pretty. But, oh, Connie, honey," gazing at the tall fair girl and twisting the pearls in her hand, "the old portrait in the west parlor — that is what you would be in pearls and a white satin. My heart! When I saw that white satin skirtheet in the portrait ripped up with Sherman's bayonets, I felt as if it was my own gown —"

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And then Connie's harp rang out the air of "The Young Chevalier," and Jack Knowles, hearing it as he came down from his upper room, could make up his mind to follow the Boynewaters only because he had no acquaintance with the Gilroys.

It was the next day, after office hours, that, just as Connie in her blue wrapper came from the bath, which always seemed to her a necessary antidote to the atmosphere of the day's work, Hélène and Agnes rapped again at the low door on the landing. "We want to borrow you," they said to Connie. And they rustled out of the room with her before she could gainsay them, and had her up in their own room, buried in a big towel, with Mademoiselle Vide's fingers twirling the pale thick strands and masses of her hair, heaping curl over curl and braid over braid. "There!" said Hélène, as mademoiselle gathered her paraphernalia and disappeared. "One must take Vide when one can have her. She came in the forenoon once, and we had to hold ourselves just so all day long. You dear wondering dear, you're just too lovely for

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anything! An old French picture isn't a circumstance to you. Now—you won't mind—you're going out with us, and you're going to wear this white crêpe—"

"No, no, no!" with frightened eyes.

"Yes, yes, yes! It will never be known—there are such dozens of crêpes. And we've wreathed it with these great silk cactus flowers—no one but a white thing like you could wear the scarlet flames. And you shall have the pearls—"

"Oh, you don't understand. I can't!"

"And we're all going to the President's levee with papa. We thought you might object to going to Mrs. Daingerfield's or Mrs. Dusenbury's without a card, but the President's house, you know, is your house, and you've a right to go there."

"Oh!" cried Connie, when she could be heard. "It never would do in the world. You don't see!—I'm only a girl in the Printing Bureau—"

"You're our company to-night. And I guess a girl in the Printing Bureau has her rights as much as a girl in the White House."

“ But I don’t belong — I could n’t keep it up. Oh, you don’t know how kind you are — how I should like to go ! But it is n’t to be thought of ! ”

And then suddenly Hélène and Agnes rushed down for Mrs. Gilroy.

“ Not go ? ” cried Mrs. Gilroy, returning with them, her thin face flushed and eager ; “ when you have the chance ? My goodness ! why not ? ”

“ Oh, I ’m not fit, ma.”

“ Constantia Gilroy,” said her mother, solemnly, “ when these people in power were pore white trash your pa and I were drivin’ in our own wag’n up to the White Sulphur, and livin’ in one of the cottages, and drinkin’ the waters, and hearin’ the band music, and dancin’ every night with the firheest people in the South. Miss Veronica’s and Miss Sedley Sidney’s father’s cottage was next to it, — they were single ladies then, and I remember they used to put me in mind of silk muslin flowers, but I have n’t had the heart to go near them, though I know they live here somewhere, and — ”

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“But, ma,” said Connie, “that has nothing to do with it!”

“Of course she will go, Miss Hélène, and be glad to go. And you are two dears. Yes, it’s a mighty heap like Cinderella and two fairy godmothers; and you’ll be home from the levee before twelve o’clock, anyway.”

And then the girls ran down with her and Connie, their arms full of the things that Connie was to wear. And after their spare dinner Mrs. Gilroy gave each article of dress an inspection, half regretted that Connie’s complexion did not require the offices of rouge and powder, and proceeded to lace the girl up in the crêpe gown, setting a knee against her back and pulling might and main.

“Ma!” gasped Connie. “Ma! I can’t breathe!”

“You’ve just gotter breathe, honey. There! you’ll catch on presently. You’ve grown right slack, wearin’ loose dresses so. Here, Tolly, you help!”

“Laws ter gracious, Miss Jule!” said Tolly, standing off at last and surveying

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their work. "Ef she ain' de bery spit er de portrait ob ole madame dat hang in de wes' parlor 'foh de wah!"

"Oh, Connie Gilroy," cried her mother, as she wound the pearls about her throat, "what a beauty you are!"

And the girl would not have been a girl, with the great dazzling fearsome world lying out there before her, if she had not blushed and laughed with joy and excitement, kissing her mother, kissing Tolly, and crying to Mrs. Gilroy, "Oh I wish you were going too!"

"Oh, I wish I was!" And Mrs. Gilroy and Tolly took turns at the crack of the door, as the three glad young things plunged down and joined the little General where he was making the vestibule vocal. And Hélène cried: "Oh, Jack, is this you? Our cousin, Mr. Knowles, Miss Gilroy. You'll have to go on the box, Jack!" And of course that made no difference to Jack, who, when he understood that he was in the company of this heavenly creature, felt as if he had wings on his own shoulders too.

As for Connie, she was in a trance. She

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had nothing to say to any one. Her wide-open eyes were like great stars in the midnight blue ; her cheeks were like soft sweet rose leaves in the sun ; her mouth trembled with smiles ; she could not have told were she in the body or out of it when the carriage drove under the *porte cochère*, and she stepped down, and the lofty officials slammed the door. Then the doughty little General's broad back and stout elbows made way through the surging mass of all sorts and conditions, and Jack's towering shoulders were equally effective in the rear ; and as a bird might suddenly emerge from crowded ways upon clear blue space, she was defiling before the President and a line of spangled ladies ; and the music of the Marine Band blew out, and she was making on Jack's arm the endless *détour* of a vast room that seemed to her unaccustomed eyes, with its draperies, its panels, its wilderness of mirrors, the splendor dripping from its glittering chandeliers, like a dream of kings' palaces — quite unaware that the glances of the moving throng were centring on her as the most beautiful thing there ;

quite unaware of the gloating eyes of Senator Bortle—big watery floating eyes like robins' eggs on a string; equally unaware of the little dark close-cropped attaché who had asked Jack to present him—Jack, who was a clerk in the State Department, and knew most of the younger diplomats, and held them in angry contempt, and had refused the request!

“Hancock is back, I hear,” exclaimed General Boynewater, when they crossed his path, proudly taking Connie on his own arm. “We are going over to Johnny’s to drink his health. How are you, Bentinck? Senator MacMichael’s coming? Meet you later at the Ormonds’, Jack.” And in the next breath Hélène and Agnes were finding the wraps, and they were walking across Lafayette Square, leaving word for the carriage to follow, and were in a room where a dozen men, and some women so wonderfully clad that Connie could hardly believe she was in the world where she breathed every day, were grouped about a mighty gallant blue-eyed hero just back from Indian-fighting, their hands aching

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from his grasp, while they drank his health in something that to Connie was like sunshine and fire and sweetness and fragrance all foaming together. And then the carriage door had slammed again, and Connie, still wordless, and almost breathless, was whirling away to the Ormonds', the Boynewater girls taking the responsibility, and as delighted with her delight as if they had made this dazzling world of after-dark themselves.

Connie, who had heard of so little, had heard of fairyland; and she experienced a filmy sensation that here it was, as she caught the tones of flute and violin, and bent her lofty head under the palms and long banana leaves, saw the vine-clad stairways where shapes of loveliness ascended and descended, the tall tripods on the landing overflowing with burning roses, slabs bedded with violets, and mantels and doorways streaming with ivies and scarlet passion-flowers, the air meanwhile heavy with the breath of unseen masses of heliotrope and jasmine. She saw, without knowing that she saw, the soft lustre of innumerable wax-lights illumining the shimmer of silk

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and lace, and the frosty splendor of diamonds that seemed more alive than the beautiful bosoms beneath them, the beautiful faces above them, pouring over the glitter of uniforms and jewelled orders, over the wild flowing of the dance beyond. Then presently she found herself in the front row of the german, two chairs having already been tied together there by Jack. She was taken out more frequently than, on the whole, Jack liked, and danced like glad wildfire, till she glanced up to meet the bold bleary gaze of Senator Bortle, who leaned against a doorway, unconscious of the stain of Burgundy he wore. Then the instinct of repulsion woke her from her dream and made her only a living, breathing statue, and ten times more beautiful to Jack than she had been before.

It was when the champagne breakfast was served the dancers on the floor that Senator Bortle, having added materially to the Burgundy stains, got himself presented to her; and, in spite of Jack, it was he who put her into the carriage, when, just before the dawn, they all rolled home, dishevelled.

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as bacchantes, weary but joyous. And Mrs. Gilroy opened her door, sleepy, but joyous too, and kissed her finger-tips to the Boynewaters, and drew Connie in, and turned up the gas, and looked at her ecstatically. "Oh I'd like to have Miss Veronica Sidney see you now!" she said. "Well, it's no use going to sleep at this hour. Tolly will make the coffee presently, and you shall tell me all about it." And she sat like one under a spell, as if it were she that had the dress and the dance and the triumph and the joy, while she listened, leaning forward and holding her tired head in her hands.

Tolly sprang up with a bewildered start from the lounge, where her massive proportions had been reposing in deep slumber. "'Clar' ter goodness!" she exclaimed, as she looked at Connie walking up and down the room in the still unquenched pleasure of her story. "Den I ain' dead an' gone ter heben foh sho'! Dess gwine ter say p'intedly, 'I don' desarb it noways, Mars' Gabriel: I done stole Miss Jule's pink ribbin, w'en I warn' dat ar high, toobysho'!'—an' I seed 't was yo', honey. Yasser, sho's yo' bawn, hi-yi!"

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“Tolly stayed because she knew I was right down scared alone with all the dogs barking —”

“An’ dese yer conterban’s all ober town a-tryin’ ter git a man’s libin’ out’n his mouf,” said Tolly. “But dare ain’ no more’n time now, I spec I reckon, foh me ter git my ole man’s corn bread an’ bacon, an’ Abram off ter his schule. Dare, honey, yo’ neenter be s’prised yo’ ole Tolly took yo’ foh Gabriel — yo’ looks lak a gret butterfly wid his wings tore down. I’s be cropin’ up agin bime-by, Miss Jule.”

“No, no, mammy dear,” said Connie. “There’s some coffee left over. You run along. And when our ship comes home you shall have a silk gown, Tolly. Good-by now. And, oh, ma,” still going on with her recital, “I was waltzing down the room with an officer — oh, not a young man, but so gay, so kind, so pleasant, ma! And who do you reckon it was? You’d never dream — I’ll have to tell you — General Sherman!”

“Sherman, Connie! Sherman!” almost shrieked Mrs. Gilroy, clapping her hand over

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her mouth. "Oh, Connie!—oh, what ever made me let you go? Oh! oh! we did wrong; we might have known—"

"Ma, I just think you believe it was he with his own bayonet—"

"Stabbed the old portraits!"

"Ma, dear, you're an unreconstructed rebel!"

"Oh, hush, Connie, hush! If any one heard you—and we lost our place—"

And tired out with pleasure and vicarious pleasure, they both began to cry, and fell asleep at last in each other's arms, still crying, and only awoke to find that Connie had not a moment to lose in tearing off her finery and getting into her black alpaca and hurrying to her work.

Mrs. Gilroy passed the day shaking and brushing and wiping off the pretty gown, pressing the crumpled ribbons, sewing up here and there a rip, smoothing out the silken petals of the cactus flowers, moistening them with a little quince-water, and tying them into shape till dry; while Tolly, who came up after lunch to talk over the report of victory, spent her energy with

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bread crumbs on the gloves, till at nightfall the toilet lay almost as fresh and resplendent as it was when Connie put it on.

“’Foh de Lawd, Miss Jule,” said Tolly, “we won’ be atter keepin’ honey fo’ long. Ef her pa ’d done lib ter seen ’er las’ night yo’d ’a’ hatter whoop ’im, sho’, de po’ chile! She look dess de way a rose wid de dew on it is bleedzed ter look.”

“Oh, Tolly,” said Mrs. Gilroy, resting her head on the kind and ample bosom, “what a comfort you are!”

“’Deed, then, Miss Jule, ole miss uster say ’t was all Toll was made fo’. Dare, dare, now, a tired lamb —”

“Oh, the day you met up with me in the street and followed me in here, Tolly, if you ’d been an angel from heaven the sight of you would n’t have been half so good!”

“’Clar’ ter gracious!” exclaimed Tolly, chuckling with the notion. “W’en Tolly’s one ob dese yer angels, Miss Jule, ’t won’ be a brack one. Mind how, w’en her pa shot de w’ite herons, li’l’ missy cry fo’ fear he done shoot de angels? Alwes was dess so tender-hearted. See her now, I kin, wid

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her tier full er de chick'ns she tuk fum de speckle hen, dat tromple an' sot onter 'em hebby all she cud do, she ses. It dess maks me die er-laffin' ter 'member de big rooster dat was her pet, tappin' ter de po'ch slats fo' her ter be gwine out. 'Deed she was a sweet lamb! I was tellin' on'y dis yer mornin' ob de time she done stick de rain-lilies all thoo her pooty har, so's ter hab it lookin' like dey wuz her brack mammy's teenty bar-becue braids. She dess t'ought her mammy was a holy show dem days, sho 'nuff." And Tolly lingered with her beguiling reminiscences till Connie opened the door at length, almost too tired to speak, and her old mammy put her to bed and rubbed the life back into her.

"No," said Connie, the next day, "I will take the things back now. I shall not go any more. You see yourself, ma, it is n't possible. Miss Hélène and Miss Agnes can sleep all day. I must be off at work. And it is no use. I am one of the working people now. It was awfully pleasant — but — well, I reckon I've seen it all, anyway." And in spite of her mother's outcry that she

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was throwing away her chances, that she was set as Chickamauga Crag, that she was all Gilroy, without a drop of Talliaferro in her, Connie took back the white crêpe and the gloves and the scarf and the cloak and the flowers and all the rest.

“The dear dress!” said her mother, laying it over her arms and tossing back her head quickly, that the falling tear might not touch it.

“Oh, when you were going to be such a success!” cried Hélène, as Connie surrendered the pretty armful. “And we had such plans and invitations for you!”

“I could n’t accept them, you know.”

“And the Senator!” said Agnes.

“Oh, he does n’t signify!”

“Papa would say that he signifies a great deal!” said Agnes.

“Miles and miles of lumber forests and coal mines. And the combustion of carbon signifies diamonds,” said Hélène.

And that night the Boynewaters came up without cards and with the Senator. And Mrs. Gilroy was in a mild alarm and an amiable flutter, Tolly stepping behind

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the curtain; but the ivory nymph that leaned across her harp was not more cold and irresponsible than Connie was. It made no difference, however, to the Senator. Archimedes could move the world if he had a place whereon to stand, and the Senator had found the place.

Things that had for so long been moving with a stagnant flow for Connie Gilroy had suddenly begun to rush. She had been detained about her work, and having gone down the Avenue on an errand, was hurrying home in the dusk when she became aware of a measured step behind her, hastening when she did, and overtaking her; and she turned her head at a word of salutation to find herself addressed by the little dark and close-cropped attaché with whom she had no acquaintance. Without a second glance she quickened her steps, presently to something like a run, as the fellow, endeavoring to speak, kept beside her; and reaching the house at last, she flung herself into the vestibule, only to be followed by him, her shriek of excitement and panic perhaps

adding speed to the movement of Jack Knowles, then just sallying forth.

It was Jack's moment. He burst through the door; saw the thing at a glance. "It isn't the first time!" he exclaimed, and he caught the little attaché by the collar and tossed him out on the sidewalk, where he pitched, staggering, across the bricks and fell among the cobblestones of the gutter. He was found there by the police shortly after, and the newspapers next day came near making an international incident of it, — Miss Celeste Dreer's report of it in the *Graphic* being remarkably good reading.

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Gilroy, inspired by that one of her ideas which troubled her the most, as Jack, taking his chance in both hands, came in with Connie, "you are in the State Department—he will complain—and you will lose your place."

"No, he won't," said Jack. "If he opens his mouth he'll lose his own place, and he knows it. Oh, I hope you are better now!" turning to the breathless Connie.

Nothing could have been more oppor-

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tune for Mr. Jack. Of course he had to ask in the morning how Miss Connie was, and to send some roses before him, and to come in the evening and beg to see for himself. And of course Connie played and sang to him till Senator Bortle tapped at the door; and then Mrs. Gilroy had to tell him the story, and Connie had to grow as still, as the Senator said to himself, as frozen peach and snow.

Nevertheless the Senator came again, and then he came again; and he did not know, and would not have cared if he had known, that Connie dusted the room every time he left it. The people in the house, except the one or two who knew of Jack's state of mind, felt as if all the Gilroy difficulties had come to an end; for here was there not a senator of the United States at their command? And was it for a moment to be supposed that a penniless girl, with a penniless mother, dependent on capricious labor, would frown upon his suit?

Jack supposed it, however; but in the face of odds.

“You had better put it behind you,

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Jack," said General Boynewater. "For you see yourself what are a clerk's chances beside a senator's."

"Oh, hang a senator's!" muttered Jack.

"You can't hang a senator's. Look at it rationally, Jack. There's no one — no one living, short of the Prime Minister of England — who is a senator's peer. He is the representative in council of a sovereign State. The State may be small, but it is an independent power, and he is its accredited ambassador to the world. Here in Washington he is practically omnipotent. If he wants anything, he has every other senator behind him. A senator's wife takes precedence of the wife of the British Minister. And if you don't know what that means to the feminine heart, it's time you did!"

"I deny your inference," said Jack. He was sure that the heavenly simplicity of Connie Gilroy's nature — But he could not utter the thought. To speak her name at all was a sort of profanity.

"And then the man's a millionaire."

And there Jack groaned.

"No, no," he said, in a moment, as the

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General gathered up the reins. "There is nothing more sordid about her than there is about a drop of dew."

"Glad you think so. So do I. But we live in the world, and money is simply the blood of the world. Why, even a squaw in the tepee —"

As if a squaw belonged to the same creation as Connie Gilroy!

"Never mind about the squaw," said Jack.

"What's the matter with the Senator?" said the little General. "He's a man of power. If he finds living perhaps too pleasant — well, you might do no better in his place, Jack. If you really care for the girl, you shouldn't be standing in her light. You have nothing in the world but that little frame house on the M Street bank that you bought for the rise in land. Stands you in for a thousand, maybe. And he — he can give her the luxury of princes. She'll be just as happy with the one as with the other after a couple of years, say; and she'll be a great deal better off with the one."

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“If you say another word,” exclaimed Jack, “I will get out and walk home.”

“Well,” said the General, “your legs are long enough, and your ears, too.”

But in spite of all that the General and the rest of the world might say, Jack knew where Connie’s happiness lay, and was determined to act upon his knowledge. The soft spring weather with its high white light in the upper sky had come, the slopes of the Capitol grounds were purple with violets, and out of town the orchards were clouds of blush and fragrance. One day the General took a party down to Mount Vernon. He was a kindly soul and he asked Celeste Dreer and the other young ladies in the house, with Mrs. McQueen’s two stepdaughters, Miss Milly and Miss Florry, much the finest ladies in the house, to come with the others. He had asked Jinny Cantrell, the young actress, — who was a delightful mystery and surprise to Agnes and Hélène, being the first person from stageland they had ever met, — but she had a rehearsal.

Connie had enjoyed the long green reaches,

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and the lonely desolation of the shores, and the slow wash of the great river, the distant crowing of the cocks, the bay of some great hound, the chirping of the little naked pickaninnies on the water's edge, the smoke of their father's cabin above. As she stood on the spacious piazza and strolled over the slope where the hyacinths were springing in the grass, she felt like a glad child the liberty of her absence from office, and she ate the dainties Hélène and Agnes were spreading on the grass, and drank from the glass Jack brought her, with an irresponsible sense of no to-morrow. Then suddenly she understood it was Senator Bortle's picnic, as he joined them, and she rose and strayed off into the garden.

The little General assisted himself laboriously to get upon his feet and go after her. "My dear child," said he, puffing along beside her, "you—you haven't any father. And you must let me say that you—really—you are not treating the Senator—"

"Do you think my father would have liked me to—to—do differently?" said Connie, looking down.

“Assuredly! assuredly! The Senator—”

“If it were Miss Hélène—would you?” said Connie, looking up, while the General felt as if he had seen a blue flash like that of a swallow’s wing.

“Well, I—that is, my dear—it alters the case; because, you see—”

“Yes?” said Connie softly then.

“She’s as dense as a Cheshire cheese,” said the General afterward. But perhaps the reason the conversation was not continued was that Agnes, looking after them, with a strange light opening her eyes, had sent her cousin Jack to make a third. And presently the little General returned, routed, to finish the claret with the Senator at the lunch hamper—the Senator, who was placing his reliance on a *coup* yet to be played—and Jack and Connie had a half hour in heaven as they wandered along the alleys of the old gardens and between the hedges breast high with spicy box. When they came down to the boat, and paused a moment where some little lads, to please their elders, were making a sport of patriotism and taking the oath of allegiance at the

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tomb, "It is not the only oath of allegiance taken to-day, as I'm a sinner!" whispered Miss Hélène to her sister. And all the way up the river Connie sat in such a stupor of joy that she did not even know the Senator sat beside her, nodding sleepily after his libations to the evil gods.

The great legislator was, however, quite wide awake by the time they reached the wharf, and was in a gay and bantering mood as they trundled along homeward; and when they reached a candy shop he must have them all out for bonbons; and then, strolling along the Avenue, he was presently stopping at a jewelry window, where Connie found herself half pushed through the doorway by those behind her. "For," silently and consentaneously reasoned his cousins after all, "this is a poor outlook for Jack, and for her too. And if she should see what it is the Senator can do for her—" And there was the Senator displaying the treasures that had been sent over from New York for his inspection, and Connie would have been more than woman and less than human could she have hindered a cry of delight at their

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beauty, especially with all the others exclaiming too, and her mother, dark and flushed and longing, with eager eyes beside her.

For the Senator held up a huge opal carved with a Flying Mercury, looking like the sky out of which the god might break on any of these radiant fogs where the sun dissolved the vapors over the Potomac. The thin and sallow hand that flashed towards it and then away was not Connie's. Nor did she put out her hand when he lifted a pendant of pearls, blue and blush and black and bronze, and milky ones lustrous as white fire. Then, as Connie would have drawn back behind Miss Hélène, who was critically examining an Indian bangle, this purchaser in the slave market balanced before her eyes a huge barbaric butterfly, whose wings were laminae of tourmaline, deep crimson at the core, melting out to palest rose, and that shading into delicatest green and down to blackness, the body a precious cat's eye, the antennae of tiny sparks. But Connie still said nothing; the exclamations of the others perhaps covered her silence. Her mother's hollow whispers were like a moan. He took

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up a circlet of loose-swinging rubies, from whose centre hung a twilight-blue aquamarine of strange tinct and cut.

“Oh,” cried Miss Agnes, turning to see if her sister saw, “how unspeakably gorgeous!” while Mrs. Gilroy’s eyes implored the General’s help.

“It is yours,” murmured the Senator to Connie, taking his opportunity. “Any of them — all of them — all yours if you will.”

“No, no, no ; oh no !” answered Connie, in the same tone. “I do not accept gifts.”

“Ah, I see !” he said then. “Nothing will do but diamonds. Well — and these are no common stones.” And he took from an inner pocket of the casket a pair of unset diamonds that the jeweller planted in the long pincers over the black velvet. They were the size, perhaps, of a hazelnut, and blue as the sky itself, and splendid as the blue sky poured full of sunshine. “They were a queen’s once,” murmured the Senator again, Hélène and Agnes busy with a second bangle. “They shall be another queen’s. My wife shall wear them ; and they will not

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match the blueness and the glory of her eyes."

"I hope they will be becoming to her," said Connie, turning to leave the place. "Come, ma, dear" — Jack, who had waited in the doorway, joining her as she went along, her mother lingering and looking back and slowly following, as though each step gave pain.

"That settles it, I fancy," whispered Celeste to Miss Agnes. "Connie can't be bought. But I'm sorry for Jack by-and-by. She will always remember those blue diamonds."

It seemed to have settled it indeed. And that night, after Jack had gone up to his own room, remembering this scene, but still more vividly remembering Connie as she sat playing on her harp in the low room, her hands lying like live white flowers on the muted strings, remembering the last moment ere they said good-night — Tolly, with nods and becks and wreathed smiles, having called Mrs. Gilroy behind the curtain — he hardly knew were he sleeping or waking. So deep and so glad was his dream that it

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seemed scarcely more real than the dream into which he slipped.

The gladness of the dream still wrapped the lovers even after the Boynewaters — fearing the warmer weather, and the General, having finished his business with the Secretary — had left town, although with urgent invitation to the Gilroys, and the Senator had come up and taken a part of their rooms.

“Wha’s he dar foh?” said Tolly, when she brought home the clothes. “Co’tin’ our Miss Connie wid his low-down imper-ence — ornery w’ite trash! He t’ink Miss Connie look at him wid one eye shet? Skasely.”

“Oh, Tolly, he has such a heap of money!” sighed Mrs. Gilroy. “She’d be at the very top of everything.”

“She’s top er t’ings now, honey, Miss Connie is. Wha’s his money wuff?” as she let down Mrs. Gilroy’s hair and began brushing out its length. “I spec’ Mars’ Jack ’ll git her all she done wants, and nobody neenter wants more’n dey wants. Go ’long wid yer Mars’ Senator!” said Tolly, whis-

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ting millions down the wind as if a cabin over in the Liberties were enough for human happiness. "Dare, now, chile, Mars' Jack 'll be right smart ob a comfort to yo' yit. Dess t'row dat worry off'n yo' ter Mars' Jack an de Lawd, an' let ole 'Tolly comb yo' pooty ha'r out twell yo' gits ter sleep. Yo's on'y mammy's baby yo'se'f, po' deah."

Everywhere now the sunbeams showered down fervently, and the clouds of the Capitol dome rose from under-clouds of greenery, and where the river wound, its steep south bank was green as virgin forest. Sometimes, after office hours, Jack took Connie out in his skiff, the shells of the Analostans and the Potomacs sweeping by; and they lingered in the open water above the Three Sisters till sunset painted the stream and made it seem as if they floated in mid-heaven. Or they waited till the moonlight wrapped them, they two alone, in silvery space. Sometimes Jack brought round horses, and they were off down Rock Creek way, where the dogwood boughs stretched white level floors of bloom aloft through the forest; and they forded the stream and came

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in over the Heights, past gardens that seemed in the soft dark a wilderness of flower and fragrance. Or they were up by sunrise and riding out on the Maryland hill roads, where, far away, the city with its rosy colors lay below them in the quivering light, like the dream of some flower-set place of columned corridors and temples. Or they galloped across to Arlington, as people had been wont in the former times, with the dew on the grass, and looked back on the dome across the river and wondered concerning the pleasant old days with morning guests to breakfast there, and all the gayety that had gone down under the billows of death that seemed to roll and break visibly here in the long cresting lines of headstones, and that gave their joy the dash of sadness which makes a saving shadow. And they went out in the warm evenings, after the roses began to intoxicate the air — the great crimson-black roses, the pale blush, the spotless snowy ones — and strolled in the blossomy squares, or sat in the soft shadows till the caged mocking-birds hanging outside the windows began their wild sweet music.

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But not in all this time did the Senator forget his pursuit. Flowers were almost daily sent to the Gilroy door; and the hint was not taken when no thanks were returned, nor when finally they were left to perish outside. Little pasteboard boxes of sherbet were brought there and declined, and large, long glasses bristling with straws and green stems of mint, rich with berry or cherry and the sparkle of ice, and creaming with the cordial julep. It is a shame to have to say that once Tolly, being there, took such a glass from the messenger's hand and imbibed its juices herself, with much happy rolling of her great tender eyes and unctuous smacking of her lips. "Tell yo' mas'r," she said to the boy, "he's a Chrissen gen'l'man."

Occasionally the Senator ascended the half flight and took a long breath and knocked. It occurred once to Mrs. Gilroy, as she opened the door herself, to say that they were not at home; but she had not the quality; and she admitted him as belonged to Southern hospitality, and treated him becomingly, and would have Connie play at his request, cold enough although Connie

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was to chill the hottest fervor ; and the Senator felt as if at last he had laid hand on his hope, and he renewed his proposal, only to receive the same reply as on previous occasion.

It was the long session of Congress. The Senator in his seersucker clothes, and with his large light umbrella and palm-leaf fan, made himself as comfortable as he could, although his rubicund countenance beaded with warm drops told of but ill success. In the evenings, as he took his chair and sat out with Celeste Dreer and the young actress, Virginia Cantrell, and some other of the various lodgers and boarders, on the broad sidewalk, one must endure his society or go into the house that was something like an oven after the fire has been drawn a little while.

It would have been unpleasant to any one less simple minded than Connie to come wandering home with Jack and to encounter the company sitting with the Senator and his fan, and for whom he had usually ordered up ices from the confectioner's on the Avenue. The ices were no temptation to Con-

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nie going quietly by. But the beggar begging for his drop of water hardly longed with more longing than Mrs. Gilroy had in knowledge of those ices out there, she suffering within, remembering with a pang the proposal for Connie's hand that had first come to her through the General, angry that Connie could not have found the Senator to her mind, and then despising herself as she recalled the moist mountain of flesh and contrasted it with the half-heroic air of a person tall and straight and dark and spare and tender. All the same, the anger would recur when in the late afternoons, if she chanced to be in the front of the house, she saw Gloria Campeador, and other as fine ladies, in their open carriages, with their gay parasols, driving by to Harewood and the Soldiers' Home, or out to Fort Whipple, and knew they were cooled by the breeze of their own motion, and knew they would drive down in the delicious dark over the Long Bridge and the water, or by the K Street market, with the torches flaring over the heads of the mules and the colored people, emerging out of blackness, over piles

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of crisp vegetables and berries and the boughs of blossoms there, and felt herself withering with heat, and thought of Connie at the sweltering work of the Printing Bureau. But the moment she heard Jack's proud step come ringing into the hall, all her faint heart went out in loyalty to him, and she said she would die of the heat and thirst before she would let Jack have a sorrow. And then she used to say to Tolly that she really didn't know whether she or Connie was the most in love with Jack.

But one day Mrs. Gilroy made a fatal mistake. The Senator had called before Connie's return from office, and had spoken again of his wishes and purposes in regard to her.

"It seems right unkind," said Mrs. Gilroy, "here in my own room, but you just ought to have more sense, Colonel. Down in my country we don't speak of such things till the bride-cake's baked, but when my daughter marries, anyway, it will be Mr. Knowles that stands up with her."

"I can't credit it!" puffed the Senator. "I—I ought to forbid the banns! A

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Department clerk, who can have nothing — that superb creature, who should ride in her carriage and wear her cashmeres — ”

“Not in dis yer wedder,” murmured Tolly, behind the curtain.

“Oh, I know it, I know it!” said Mrs. Gilroy. “And if her pa had only lived — ”

“But, you see, he did n’t,” said the Senator, softly. “And when I think there is n’t a princess in Europe could look as she would in a coronet of old-mine stones, and that I could give it to her — ”

“I wish you could!” said Mrs. Gilroy.

The Senator sat a little while, leaning forward with one elbow on his knee, and forgetting to fan himself and to wonder how any one existed in that superheated room. When he looked up there was an unusual brightness in his watery eye. “I sha’n’t take this as final,” said he. “I’ve wanted a good many things in my life, and I’ve always got them. Perhaps she’ll listen to reason by and by.” He paused a moment. “It’s for her own good,” he said.

“Toobysho’!” murmured Tolly.

“At any rate, Mrs. Gilroy, if you ever

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find yourself in need of a friend, you'll know where to look for him."

"Oh, I'm always in powerful need," cried Mrs. Gilroy.

"Very well," said the Senator.

It was the next afternoon that Connie came home with a weary step and an ashen face. The great heat was beginning to tell upon her; but this pallor was born of more than the heat. The head of her division had told her that her services were no longer required. Another person with more influence had her place.

But before Mrs. Gilroy had time to realize the blow, in the materialization of her most haunting idea, Jack had followed. And when Tolly, as she went home, passed the Senator at the door out of which she sometimes chose to go rather than by the alleyway, bursting with pride and joy she could not contain herself; and looking down at him from the corners of her big dancing eyes, as she balanced her basket of clothes on her head, she went along muttering: "Lawd-a-mussy! 'Mos' allus ginerly folks burns dare fingers meddlin'. Dess natally

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hurries up de cakes. De sun 'ain' done shine on a w'iter bride 'n my Miss Connie gwine be nex' week comin', 'cept Miss Jule herse'f was, foh sho'!"

Perhaps the Senator's next interference was more to the purpose. For when Jack went to his desk, a morning or two later, there lay the dreadful yellow envelope. For a moment the handsome head that Connie loved went down upon the desk. What in the world was there to do? Now everything was impossible.

His chief had no help for him. He, an employé of the State Department, had assaulted a member of the diplomatic body — the little attaché, of whose punishment the Boynewaters and the Senator had so laughingly and indignantly approved. After such action, which had just been reported, and which had been fully related in a *Graphic* letter of the time, it was idle to hope to be reinstated.

And the life of the office had unfitted him for everything else. And if it had not, what was there to which he could turn his hand in a hurry? What that would stand

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in this gap of life and death for Connie and her mother? The sale of the little M Street site and shanty could cover only the present needs. He saw himself, down a sudden vista, hanging on the hope of another place when the Senator should be snowed under, down at heel, borrowing money, living from hand to mouth. He would be better going out and taking up a quarter-section. But what was Connie for a rough life and the battle with the wilderness? And give up Connie, his dear girl, his white innocent—and the day of their wedding named—ah, never! And he walked the morning long in the sultry heat, slow and laggingly after a time, and fell prostrate on the lounge in the low, dim room at last, insensible from sunstroke.

“Oh, Tolly, Tolly!” cried Mrs. Gilroy, wringing her helpless hands when Tolly came in that night. “What, what is to become of us? We’ve lost our place! And so has your Master Jack! And not a pica-yune to cross ourselves with!”

“Prince er darkness! Dat’s bad news foh sho’!” said Tolly. “Huh! An’ I ’ain’

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brung my t'inkin'-cap erlong. Dat look jubus."

"And we shall starve to death, Tolly!"

"Sho', now, honey!"

"Yes, yes, we've either to beg or starve, and it's a heap sight easier to starve!"

"Sho', sho,' now, honey! I 'ain' no patience wid yo', Miss Jule. Gilroys talkin' 'bout starbin'! Who said dat ar," cried Tolly, fiercely, taking off her bandanna and tying it in a more defiant topknot than before, "bout de seed ob de righteous? Yo' ain' gwine be fo'saken, Miss Jule, wid dese yer han's in de worl'!"

"Oh, my poor Tolly!" sobbed Mrs. Gilroy.

"Tellin' 'bout picayunes," exclaimed Tolly, "dar's a right smart ob 'em in de box wid my ole man's razor."

"Oh, Tolly, Tolly, what of it?"

"W'at ob it? W'y dey's yo's. I sesso."

"Tolly dear! You know I can't take your money."

"My money, Miss Jule? Well, now, I likes dat. My money! W'y, Miss Jule! Honey!" urged Tolly, with the silkiest

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persuasion in her voice. “Don’ I ’long ter yo’? Ain’ de bery breff in my body yo’s? Ain’ I, an’ my chilluns, an’ eberyting I ’se got, yo’s? Yo’ don’ spec’ yo’ reckon anyting dis yer mis’able no-account No’tthen gub’ment says make any diff’unce in tings as dey really be? Dese yer fractitious Yankee laws, dey can’t make brack wite. An’ I ’se brack, an’ yo’ sarbunt, an’ yo’ prop’ty, an’ de wuk ob yo’ han’s! I ’longs ter yo’, Miss Jule, honey!” said Tolly, sitting down beside Miss Jule and holding out both her poor hands, with the rosy palms upward, as if to put on the old fetters.

“Oh, Tolly, Tolly!” cried Mrs. Gilroy, her arms round Tolly’s neck and her head upon the comfortable bosom. “We have n’t a friend in the world but you!”

“An’ dat ’s a plenty!” said Tolly. “Yo’ dess keep de ice on Mars’ Jack’s head — de po’ suff’rin’ martyr dis yer ’dic’lous ornery Pruridun’ done mak ob ’im, — an’ Tolly ’ll do de res’, atter a w’ile. Yo’ neenter be cast down dat a-way, li’l missy. I spec’ dar’s folkses in de worl’ wusser off ’n yo’ is. Yo’ dess watch out twell yo’ see our

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Miss Connie hole up her head wid de swimmyess set ob dem all, an' axin' howdy ter de Queen ob France like she was an'er queen herse'f, hi-yi !”

The smoke was curling busily out of the chimney of the cabin over on the island next day ; and the appetizing odors that poured through the door were continually bringing from his play a little colored boy, whose sole garment was a pair of trousers buttoned round the neck.

“ Now, Abram Linkum Tollifer,” cried Tolly, her face glittering with perspiration and joy, “ yo’s done hab all de mush an’ milk yo’ could carry dis yer breathin’ mornin’. An’ yo’ gwine ter hab ’taters an’ pepper an’ po’k-fat foh dinner ; an’ yo’ ain’t ter say a word ter yo’ pa w’en he come fum wuk, ’bout dis an’ all. Ef yo’ does, I dess lam yo’ twell yo’ drap. Now yo’ hear me ? An’ I put yo’ ter bade an’ call de bogy ter sot by ! But good li’l boys has dare molasses biled wid fat ter dip dare hoe-cake inter, toobysho’. Yo’ sees, sonny,” she said, in the more amicable

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tone, as she carefully laid the viands in a basket, while Abram's mouth watered and his great eyes rolled mightily in his little serious face, "up dar ter Miss Jule's — 'tain' lak dey was hungry or did 'n' hab de fat ob de lan'ter lib on. Lawd-a-mussy, dey hes poun'-cake fried foh brekfuss, an' birheds up, dressed, fum Andy Hancock's, an' ice-creams th'ee times ebery day ob dare libes. An' de roas' 'possums layin' roun' de carbin'-tables dare — 'tain' no use talkin'!"

"I di' n't see none w'en I was dare," remarked Abram, wistfully.

"Yo' was tuk up. Yo' seed Miss Jule, an' Miss Connie, de w'ite flower. An' yo' knowed yo' mammy useter 'long ter dem 'foh she 'longed ter herse'f —"

"Yo' don' now," said Abram, edging nearer to the sweet-cakes.

"No. We's free niggers now, bress de Lawd! An' yo's gwine ter go ter schule an' grow up a man, an' — Take dat!" — that being a sounding slap on poor Abram's little fat, peculating fingers. "Now yo' dess roar out yo' roar!" and she went on with her packing.

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“I don’ b’leeb dey hes de possums,” whimpered Abram, presently.

“Co’s e dey does. Ain’ dey w’ite quality? An’ don’ de worl’, ’possums an’ all, ’long ter de w’ite quality?”

“I years pa done tell ’bout de ’possums down in Georgy, an’ dey ’mos’ allus ginerly ’longed ter cullud pussons.”

“Well, — mebbe dey war’n’ ’possums, den. Dey was li’l roas’ suckin’ pigs, sho’ nuff; dat was w’at dey was, now I minds agin. But I warn’ dem folkses up dar ter see us po’ cullud pussons hes some t’ings down yere dess well es yuthers, ’kaze I hes ter keep up de credit ob yo’ pa’s fam’ly. An’ so I’s e totin’ up dis yer frie’ chicken an’ Merrylan’ biscuit an’ lemon cakes; an’ some day I’s e gwine tote up a piece er watermillyun, des ter let ’em see we hes watermillyun down yere ter set our teef in. Yere, now, Abram — it’s mammy’s sonny, sho’ nuff! Yo’ unnerstan’, I dess hatter do it! An’ dar’s de pan, an’ yo’ can hab de scrapin’s — dar’s ’bunnunce ob ’em; an’ w’en de circus comes agin — Loss ter gracious! dare’s a great big copper Miss Jule done gib me. Desso.

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Yo' take it an' wrop it in yo' trousers, an' done forgit off'n yo' min' all 'bout dis yer. Yo' hear me?"

"Yessum," said Abram.

".'Tain's ef yo' was skeered ob starbin'," said Tolly. "Dare, dat's mammy's boy. P'r'aps yo' pa'll go swimmin' wid yo', come Sa'day," and planting then a great moist kiss on the soft, trembling lips, she lifted the basket to her head, and felt better when she turned, after a few steps, to see Abram first looking at both sides of his penny, and then standing on his head and slapping his heels together.

"Ef yo' don' take an' eat de las' crumb, honey," said Tolly, upon Mrs. Gilroy's tearful refusal of her basket, — her hands, her head, her eyes, all her round body agitated, — "I done t'row de 'hole bakin' ob it out'n de street, an' come up yere an' do it eb'ry day! Don' yo' t'ink yo' ole Tolly's any heart? Yo' wanter bre'k it? Di'n't yo' say I'se de bes' frien' yo' hed? Huccom yo' treat a frien' dat a-way? Now, honey, I'se gwine ter come back foh de dishes to-morrer, an' by dat ar time I'se gwine hab an idy, I spec'

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I reckon, how ter totch up dat feller settin' out dar wid his fan. He don' lub de hot wedder—he's done gwine hab it hotter here, an' hereatter too—hi-yi! Like ter see ole Mars' Tollifer a-flirtin' ob a fan! Huh! I 'low he ain' no kin' ob a gen'l'man."

"That he ain't, then," said Mrs. Gilroy.

"But, yo' see, Miss Jule," continued Tolly, wiping her face with her apron, "he's dat low down ornery, ef I done gib him my 'pinion ob him, he'd dess go ter de boss an' say, 'Yo' got a nigger yere, red-headed coon called Cassio?' An' my ole man'd lose his job. An' it's a good job, Miss Jule—oh, pow'fle good! He carn' git Tolly's job, dough. He carn' git his dirty han's inter my tubs. But co'se I done go slow."

Poor Tolly's notion of going slow was to toss her chin as she passed the Senator, choosing the front door for her way, and to remark to herself, very audibly, "Huh! One ob dese yer No'then dough-faces."

Tolly did not take the cars going home.

"Two fam'lies on my han's, an' I gotter walk," she said to herself; although she was

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prepared to say to Miss Jule, if questioned, "Dem Av'nue cyars dess too full ob dose sickly no-account Afercans foh a pusson dat 'spec's herse'f ter brush up against."

She came in, the next twilight, by the alleyway, with another basket, and set it down to look round and express her delight at seeing Jack sufficiently recovered to be lying on the lounge there, with Connie's hand on his head—a comforting hand; it could not be a cool one in the stifling atmosphere of that hot and dusky room, lighted only by the reflection of the lamp in the alley.

"Now don' yo' go ter hab no feelin's 'bout dis yer," said Tolly, as she unpacked her basket and looked presently at Mrs. Gilroy, who was hiding her face in the corner of her chair and rocking in a luxury of woe. "'Tain' no time foh de Tollifer an' Gilroy pride er de flesh. I'se keepin' a restorator, I is, an' I'se trustin' yo' an' Miss Connie twell yo' kin pay me. An' I spec' yo' ter pay me, ebery copper. Yo' hes yo' reck'nin' chalked up ter my place. I cou'n't afford it no 'er way, yo' know. So yo' ain'

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under no 'bleedzmen'. Yo's holpin' ter start me in de restorator bus'ness. An' now, honey, I'se gwine holp start yo'."

"Tolly!" said Mrs. Gilroy, surprised and puzzled, but tolerant.

"Yo' see dat gre't gold harp dar?" said Tolly then. "Wha's dat foh? Wha' foh Miss Connie wuk wusser'n a mule learnin' how come it full er tune, ef 't warn' long er some puppose? Don' yo' call dat ar a reel leadin' ob de Lawd?"

"I don't know what you're talkin' about, Tolly!" said Mrs. Gilroy, petulantly.

"I'se tellin' yo', Miss Jule. W'en I see Miss Connie a-reachin' ob her arms 'crost dat ar harp an' a-twiddlin' ob her fingers thoo de strings, I dess t'inks ob de Lawd's w'ite lilies, an' I knows she won' look no diff'unt w'en she's singin' ob her hosannas in heben —"

"Oh, my goodness, Tolly, as if I did n't know all about Connie and her harp!"

"But, Miss Jule," said Tolly, bending forward impressively, "huccom dar ain' no brack folkses singin' hosannas ter dare harps in heben?"

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“How you talk, Tolly! I don’t know, I’m sure. I suppose there are.”

“Oh, no, no, honey! ’T would n’ be heben! ’T would n’ be heben noways. I spec’ I reckon de souls done grow w’ite, Miss Jule,” said Tolly. “But how is dey gwine play de harp up yander ef dey ’ain’ neber learn ter play it down yere? Desso. Dat’s w’at fotches me,” said Tolly, drawing back with her hands upon her hips, and the bright ends of the knot in her turbaned handkerchief bristling like birds ready to fly. “Huh! Miss Jule! De on’iest way is foh dem ter learn ter play dare hosannas yere, ’foh dey go dare. I’s comin’ ter de nub atter a w’ile, honey. An’ ef Miss Connie don’ effuse ter do it — it’s Chrissen wuk — I’s got a dozen li’l cullud gels, an’ dare mas’ll be tickle’ ter deff ef she gib ’em lessons onter de harp. Dare! Desso. An’ dey all dess honin’ atter it. An’ dey all hes de money ter pay, foh dey all hes dare own washtubs.”

“Tolly!” screamed Mrs. Gilroy, lifting her dishevelled head and tear-stained face from the side of the calico-covered chair where she was rocking to and fro — “Tolly Jupi-

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ter! I never knew such impudence in my born days. The i-dea! That's just what this ridiculous wah has done! A dozen —"

"Don' yo' go foh ter say it, Miss Jule!" implored Tolly, in her silveriest tone. "Don' yo' go ter gittin' ma-ad, honey. Brack money's good es w'ite. She would n' tek no harm learnin' 'em in Sunny-schule. Yo' own ma totched me de Sermon on de Mount. An' dare li'l brack han's 'ud look mighty peart pickin' on dem strings —"

"Oh, Tolly," cried Connie, "let them come! I'll like it. I'll like it right well, you dear Tolly! And, you know, ma, dear, it will be something —"

"Sumpin'?" cried Tolly. "It'll be food an' fiyeh an' clo'se twell Mars' Jack comes roun' right. An', Miss Connie, lamb," said Tolly, turning to the one who would listen to reason, "dat ar ain' de hull. Dare's Mars' Jack's place up de M Street bank. Mebbe 'tain' on'y a li'l two-story ole ram-shackle, but it's done got a po'ch, an' a bit er groun' foh a rose an' a watermillyun; an' ef yo's married ter Mars' Jack, co'se it's yo's. An' my ole man'll come wid his cyart by

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daylight, 'foh it's time fo' de boss, an' moob dese yer t'ings ob yo's wid me, wedder I habs ter hab a right smart ob a li'l chaw fus' er not. An' I'se git yo' plumb settle' dah 'foh de chilluns comes foh dare lessons. An' yo' carn' tek car' ob Mars' Jack as 't is, honey; but ef yo's his wife, co'se t'ings is diff'unt, honey," said Tolly, tenderly as a marriage benediction. "An' dar's gwine ter be a monstus rise ob lan', I years tell, up dat a-way; make de lot wuff a brick house dat keeps dese yer lodgers, an' fotch in a heap er money, twell Mars' Jack done git his bus'ness."

"Oh, Tolly," murmured Jack, "you are a blessing to society!"

"Ki-yi! Mars' Jack!" laughed Tolly. "Yo' ain' so bery past goin'! Yo's a-comin' roun' fas'. Be on yo' foots in de twinkle ob yo' eye. Now, Mars' Jack," said Tolly, stepping across the room and bending over him, "yo's done hab a trifle er money in yo' close, put by todes dese yer rainy days? Co'se, co'se. An' yo's got some fren' er nurer? Desso. Den yo' let 'im done git de licenses an' de passon ter-morrer mornin'.

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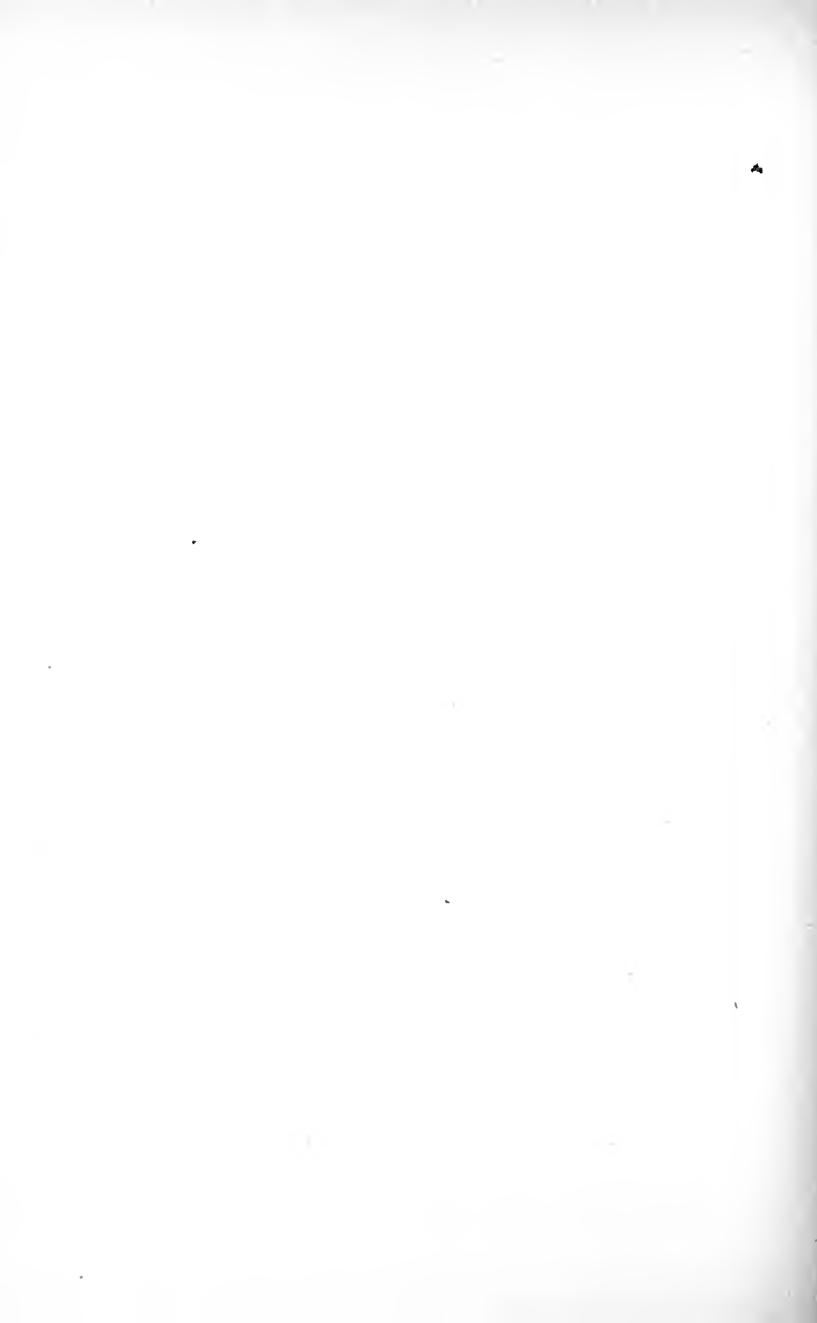
Laws ter gracious!" as she threw back her head with a peal of joyous and contagious laughter, "Ef dis yer cullud pusson's heart ain' done bust wid joy ter come walkin' down yere ter-morrer night, an' dat ar' Mars' Senator a-sottin' out yander wid his fan, an' step up an' tell him howdy, an' say, 'Yo' 'ain' seed Mis' Jack Knowles gwine out, I dun'no'?' Huh! Dare, dare; 't ain' no cos'lier to lib single nor it is double. An' de Lawd 'll tek car' ob de sheared lambs. Yo' see, he's a doin' ob it now!"

"Oh, Tolly, Tolly!" cried her penitent and reckless mistress, her arms round Tolly as far as they would go. "You are our guardian angel!"

"Huh! Miss Jule!" said Tolly, laughing and crying together. "I telled yo' afoh. Who eber heered of a brack guarding angel?"

III

In a Conspiracy



In a Conspiracy

ALL at once the heads of the grave and reverend seigneurs in the Senate chamber were turned toward the diplomatic gallery, and Senator Bortle's head with them. Harry Bentinck had just come in from the House to consult one of the senators of his State regarding a point in question, and of course his gaze followed the others. The heads slowly turned back again, and the business of the hour, which really had not had an appreciable pause, was resumed. Kindly remember that this was some years ago. Perhaps the heads of senators are not so easily turned to-day.

It was but a moment; but in that moment all things had made shift to change, and nothing was ever quite the same to Harry Bentinck, Member of Congress from a district famed for sending a powerful representative, and a man of whom rather remarkable things were expected.

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He passed his hands across his eyes with a quick, involuntary motion. "Dazzled?" said Senator MacMichael, at whose desk he stood. "Well, then, have a care. There are hidden reefs in those waters. Wiser men than you have come to shipwreck over just such spots."

But what was that to Harry Bentinck? He was suddenly aware that he was living his own life, aware of it with a fulness of the heart, a bounding of the blood, an exhilaration of the brain, that made him feel clear headed enough to understand the meaning of the universe. Alas, he had only plunged into the darkness of the greatest secret of it all! He had fallen irrecoverably in love with Gloria Campeador.

The old Senator glanced up into the gallery and glanced away again. He saw nothing there to detain the eye imperatively—just a pretty woman. But what Harry Bentinck saw was all the romance of old Spain, of young Cuba, of girlhood, of innocence, of beauty, of love. As the girl stood an instant, while her companion seated herself, one saw her tall shape and observed the

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mantilla-like effect of her hat and veil, for she was in a sort of half mourning, and then the perfect pallor, as smooth and exquisite as that of the petal of a cape jasmine, and the face in which her features were chiselled like some delicate sculpture, and where the eyes, large and black fringed, glowed like dark, unknown jewels.

“You meaner beauties of the skies,
What are you when the moon doth rise?”

Harry Bentinck was saying to himself, and he was making for the gallery, where Anthony should introduce him, when he was met by this senator and by that, with congratulations on his speech of the day before in the House, and delayed till there were too many up there to make it wise to add himself to their indistinguishable number, even if the Vice-President had not left his chair just then and walked with him to a sofa, where he might speak with him on a subject of mutual interest; for the young congressman was already a person of some importance. Well, he would make inquiries by and by, he thought. He was not to be

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baffled in anything on which he had set his heart.

And meanwhile here was this pressing piece of business; and there was the Justices' dinner; and the Cuban matter, of which he knew nothing, to look up for an interview in *The Lictor* in the interest of some of the people at home who wished to maintain things as they were; and so the time passed. And the next day a pair of constituents, who considered that they owned him, had to be taken care of and shown the city, and there were the committee meetings, and a matter to be laid before the President, and Harry Bentinck found that the man who served his country had not much time in which to serve himself. All the same he had not turned a corner without looking either way, and, although many of the young women taking their afternoon stroll on the Avenue or driving up and down its length bent for a second glance at the tall and handsome young fellow swinging down from the Capitol with the ruddiness of youth still on his countenance, in his wish to see one he saw none.

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It was quite perfunctorily and because it was expected of him, being on the committee for foreign affairs, that he went to the ball at the Mexican legation. He wandered through the rooms, seeing few that he knew and thinking he was not made for social life and he would be better at home reading up on international law, when, like a statue in relief against a mass of mossy greenery, he saw Gloria, clad in white satin, her fingers playing with the rope of pearls that, falling from the high comb in her blue-black shining hair, wound about her throat and fell again below her waist. At that moment she dropped her fan. "Thank you, Mr. Bentinck," she said very distinctly, as he bent and restored it, and then he bent again and almost as low. "I saw you," she said then, with an enchanting smile, "in the Senate chamber. I asked who you were —"

"I also, señorita — I saw you," he murmured, "but no one has told me your name."

"I am Gloria Campeador," she said gently. "They do not call me señorita,

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although I am Cuban born. But I have lived so long in New York, out of my own country, the habits follow me — ”

“ You call Cuba a country, then ? ” asked Mr. Bentinck.

“ Cuba a country ! ” The heavy white lids lifted in a flash. “ What do you call it ? A Spanish dependency ? No, no ! She is chained and bound and bleeding, but she is utterly a country, the youngest of all the countries, may be, — my country ! ” Although she spoke so low, with a sort of restraint in her voice, there was a fire beneath the tone that kindled response in the hearer.

“ You make me believe you,” he said.

“ Ah, then,” she replied, with a quick laugh, as she threw open her fan, “ that repays me for keeping my temper. And you know it is difficult,” she said quickly, half under her breath, “ when my one thought, my one hope, is for my country.”

She was so beautiful, so impassioned, as she stood there, still, half leaning, with a certain languor of attitude, but with such a glow in her eye, on her smile, that Harry Bentinck felt a sudden, strange dislike of

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other eyes upon her. "You shall tell me about it," he said.

"Here, in a ballroom?" she replied gayly. "Ah, you will forgive me that I spoke of anything so sad and serious when we should do nothing but dance." And then the music began again, and Mr. Bentinck, who had not danced for years, hardly knew how it was that he was whirling down the room, with an arm about that waist, with that fragrant hair almost touching his shoulder, and with his senses steeped in the subtle spell of the warmth, the deliciousness of the moment, the music quickening into a mad movement and sweeping them at its will.

"Stop!" she said imperiously, as the dance surged on. "Stop! It is not the way I like to dance. I will not be taken out of myself so." And the color flashed over her face, but left it as instantly in its creamy pallor, when they paused where the wind blew in, and recovered their breath under the bough of a great palm. She waved her fan slowly, shedding its violet wood odor about her. Then she looked up and smiled her slow, delightful smile.

“Dancing is like life, is it not?” she said. “Now you must take me to my aunt.” And as they went along she added, “You reverse very well.”

It was with difficulty that they threaded the crowd, detained at every turn by salutations, and now and then accosted by men who bowed their sleek dark heads and murmured some French or Spanish sentence as they passed. They paused at length before a sleepy woman of massive proportions, who sat in a row of stately dames as weary as herself.

“Ma tante,” she said, “this is Mr. Bentinck. I have introduced myself to him. I have danced with him. I have committed every impropriety—have I not, Mr. Bentinck?—which a duenna should prevent and of which a chaperon should disapprove, and I want you to condone them all,” still speaking rapidly in French, “by inviting Mr. Bentinck—Mr. Bentinck, Madame D’Arco—to call upon you at the Arlington. Won’t you?”

The duenna would have been more than human to resist that coaxing accent, and

she murmured something, and Mr. Bentinck, acknowledging the introduction and the invitation, murmured something else.

“You speak French to the madame,” he said in some surprise.

“Instead of Spanish? Never Spanish when any other language, even that of dumb signs, can be used. That tongue of the peninsulares! I would have all, all my countrymen forswear the Spanish and some day speak only the American.” And then a dancer had claimed the Cuban, and Mr. Bentinck saw her gliding away in the arms of another man with a distinct feeling of outrage. But, although he stayed by Madame D’Arco, furbishing up his best French for her benefit, further pleasure was not given to him that night. He had not even that of putting Gloria into her carriage; and all the music, all the flowers, all the jewelled dancers, all the beautiful women, were no more than phantoms moving to noiseless measures.

It was of little use for Mr. Bentinck to attempt his congressional duties the next day. The clerk seemed to be droning

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Spanish, the calling of the roll was only an iteration of the syllables of Gloria Campeador's name, and between the leaves of the folio he pretended to consult swam in that beautiful pale face, and he kept saying to himself:

“She walks in beauty like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies,
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes.”

He was, after all, an innocent young fellow, with a talent for telling speeches, and he had been pushed along by the people at home more for his promise than his performance, and partly because youth is plastic and sometimes easily moulded to the purposes of others.

He had been born to one of the big fortunes; he had been occupied with books and debates and business; he had once gone down into Mexico about some land titles and caught up a little Spanish; and he had been more than once abroad in various ways, but he had never had time to fall in love before. When at length he was called into a cloakroom for a consultation with one

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of his colleagues about a certain bounty, he agreed to everything the other said without having heard a word, and he escaped at last, as if from a bear garden, to his own rooms, a toilet, and the Arlington.

Several people were before him. Madame D'Arco, filling and overflowing her arm-chair, sat by the fire sipping her chocolate, and Gloria sent away a dark youth and invited Harry Bentinck to a place among the cushions beside herself. She was in a shapeless robe, more like a cloak than a gown, he thought, of some thin white silk, with great flots of lace, the drapery curling round her feet as she rose. A white lace mantilla fell from her hair, and she wore the pearls again.

“Do you always wear pearls?” he said.

“Almost always,” she replied. “I had other things, to be sure — Spanish topazes. I would have given them to the maids, but I sold them instead. As for the diamonds, they are my aunt's, too, and entailed anyway. And so are the great star sapphires from Ceylon, whose history is part of the history of queens. But I wear pearls for the sake of

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Cuba, the Pearl of the Antilles. That is sentimental, fantastical? At any rate —”

“At any rate, it is beautiful,” he said.

“If you mean that the pearls are beautiful, why, I know it. If you mean that Cuba is beautiful, oh, then you win my heart!”

“I would mean anything for that,” he said.

“You know I did not intend — But perhaps I shall put you to the test,” she added archly. “Is it two lumps or three? Not any tea? Nor chocolate? Then you will have a cigarette?” And she rolled him one, and then she rolled another for herself. “Is it disenchanting?” she said, holding it off after a fairy puff, and with a laugh that at all events was captivating. “But it is a custom of my country.”

“Rather of old Spain, is it not?” said Mr. Bentinck.

In an instant the cigarette had flashed into the grate. “To tell the truth, I never cared for it,” she said, “but it was just a duty, you know, to do anything that is purely Cuban.”

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“Or Russian?”

“Yes, yes! You are right. The only thing that really seems to be purely Cuban is suffering.”

“I am afraid,” he said, “that I have not considered it sufficiently. I am ill informed on this matter that interests you so deeply.”

“You shall be better informed before you leave us,” she exclaimed, and she leaned back among the cushions and looked straight before her, so proud, so pale, so melancholy, that Harry did not know whether the thrill that went through him was a pang of sympathy for her sorrow or of joy for her beauty.

But whatever she might have said was interrupted by the arrival of other guests. “Do not go,” said Madame D’Arco, beckoning him to her side. “Let them pass.” And then for an hour or more he had to endure the presence of an ex-Secretary of State, of General Boynewater and another general who had led triumphant battalions, of Senator Bortle, some women of fashion, and various foreigners.

Harry Bentinck, speaking now and then with one and another, through it all really

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saw no one but Gloria, the ease with which she discussed with the Secretary the policy of his predecessor, the sparkle with which she met the soldiers, the half gracious, half indifferent lassitude of her manner with the foreigners, the fire that every once in a while flashed out through it all. "I am tired," she said, when the door closed on the last of them. "I shall have to let you go. But you will come again?" And he went up to a night session of the House as gloomily as if he had been shut out of paradise.

It was the next morning that, something overdone, he ordered his horse for a canter out Rock Creek way before breakfast, the roads being hard with frost. It was a day when in the thin film of mist that overlay the sky the whole atmosphere seemed one vast opal, and all the country glistened in rime under hazes of blue and silver.

The charm of it, the keen air and the motion, gave him presently an exhilaration that overcame his fatigue, a nameless joy, just the joy of living and breathing, perhaps of loving. He had nearly reached the old mill when two riders came galloping down

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the crossroad and passed on without observing him, the skirt of one, the veil, the loosened tress, blowing on the wind, and the dazzling beauty of the face flashing by like an apparition. The other rider — it was not so easy. He remembered that somewhat knightly bearing. He remembered that thin, dark, eager face, with the burning eyes. He had seen it at the door of the Arlington, perhaps on the Avenue, under a sombrero.

What was she doing out here so early, with no groom, riding alone with that fellow? Mr. Bentinck felt his heart quicken, and when their speed slackened and he saw her companion bend, as he rode, and take her hand and go on slowly a few paces in that way, he felt like spurring on his good Morgan and riding the man down. But presently the two shook their bridles and proceeded at a round gait, and the young Congressman, who had unconsciously followed them, turned and took another road, very unfitted for his duties.

Perhaps Mr. Bentinck would have been still more unfitted had he heard the conver-

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sation of the riders as they went their way.

“He is important,” the man was saying; “as important as your senators. The hostile business interest — the sugar interest, you know — in his district is immense. It can make him or break him. It can drive him to open measures of hostility that may ruin us. It can demand them of him or ruin him, poor devil! I hate to make him a tool — there is something frank and generous in his bearing that takes the heart — but needs must for the cause. Add it up against the Spaniard. His birth, his breeding, his wealth, all make him a power in another way. And then the money behind him, the money of those people that can run over into elections! He is new here, but what he asks of the Administration he is very likely to have. Yes, if you can silence him, can only keep him silent, you do well.”

“Perhaps I may do better.”

“In what way?” was the quick question.

“I may have him espouse the cause — it is not impossible — give his wealth, his talent, his name, to it.”

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“He will not come back here for a second term, then.”

“Ah, well, what then? There are as good things in life as serving in that pandemonium up there.”

“I did not ask for so much as that.”

“You shall have it, though. All things are fair in love and war.”

“Well, when Cuba is free, he can have his reward, for then there will be nothing you cannot claim and have. The work you are doing in making these friends, in silencing these enemies and these possible enemies, is equal to guns. But going on with all your lovers you are like a juggler with his golden balls in the air. How long can you keep them in play? You were rather daring with Bentinck, I should say.”

“It was necessary to startle him, to arrest him. But I fancy — I don’t know — it seems to me just now that Delilah’s withes — ”

“God grant you are not over-confident, my Gloria! It is hard that you should sacrifice yourself so. But it is for our country, our dear country!”

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“ Our dear country, Virgilio ! ” And they leaned across their saddles, and he kissed her on the cheek.

Nor was Mr. Bentinck made easier in his mind by the sight of Gloria, later in the day, lunching in the Senate restaurant with Madame D’Arco and Senator Bortle, the latter known to look unfavorably on the Cuban pretensions, although her bow and smile seemed to beckon the young man to her side, and she asked him, when he came, if he were too busy to walk down the Avenue with her. He would have walked down the Avenue with her if the whole business of all the United States had come to a standstill.

But even walking down the Avenue with her alone — for she had sent Madame D’Arco home in the carriage — was not an unalloyed bliss, for as they swept along he could not help noting strange glances of recognition in Gloria’s eyes as they passed this or that dark stranger in the slouched hat, twirling his big mustachios sulkily, and more than once the hat was doffed and the word was exchanged in passing. And that these loungers, these filibustero-looking

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scamps, should have the right to speak to her seemed a sort of sacrilege that he would have liked to avenge on the spot. But then he knew he would be content with nothing less than taking her away into some far region guarded by a flaming sword, as Brunhilde's rock was guarded by fire.

"I rode this morning, and I have not been in the saddle before for some weeks, and it is good to walk," she said.

"Yes," he replied. "I rode too. I saw you."

"And did not join us?"

"Join riders who clasp each other's hands as they ride?"

She turned and looked at him a moment, and then she laughed. "You might," she said. "Alas, I shall not long have his hand to clasp!" she added, the laugh disappearing and a wave of something like anguish sweeping over the face, a wave of something like despair sweeping after it into Bentinck's heart.

She did not speak again for several minutes, looking the other way. "At some time I should like to have you know him," she said at length. "But at present — see

how I trust you — at present there is a price on his head. Still, he is tolerably safe here, I suppose, safe until he reaches Cuban waters. He is the person I love best.” A sword thrust seemed to divide Bentinck’s very being. “I mean — perhaps — oh, yes, he is the one I love best in all the world ! He is my brother, my dear brother Virgilio.”

The sword thrust healed and made itself whole in the manner of a miracle. “God bless your dear brother Virgilio !” exclaimed Bentinck.

She turned again, the sunshine of a swift smile breaking through the tears that brimmed her eyes, and impulsively held out her hand. “Oh,” she cried, “I am your friend ! My hand upon it.” And if the passersby thought the movement extraordinary, they would any of them have been glad to be a party to it.

“And you will ride with me some day ?” he said.

“Ah, that is another question,” she replied.

Just then the wind that was rising blew out the flag from the top of the unfinished

Monument, and the westering sun struck it so that its dyes had a deepened splendor. Bentinck saw it, and it shared with everything else in his feeling that to-day the universe was something perfect. She saw his glance.

“Yes,” she said, “it is like a great flower there, a great flower born out of the sky. You love it; you revere it; you would die for it. Then you know how I feel, how we feel, for our own flag. Oh, yes, you must come to me now and let me tell you the whole story, its dark side dipped in blood, its bright side—oh, it has a bright side—white, white as the light on the souls of heroes. Let me see. We dine with the Chileans, and to-night it is the opera. After the opera—no, that will not do. Well, sufficient unto the day—I am not much like your idea of a West Indian, am I?” she asked, looking at him with a lingering sweetness of expression, the least color in the world suffusing the beautiful paleness. “That is because after I left the convent over in Georgetown and Sister Blandine and her harp, I was at Madame Chermodie’s with

the society girls. She taught us charming French, and which foot to put first for the carriage step, and how to receive a gentleman—and his proposal. Ah, I am too bold! And we taught ourselves the rest, the American habits and ways, the American spirit. It was not difficult—with our mother too. But once every year while he lived my dear father took us home to Cuba, and sometimes we stayed long enough in Havana to hate the Spaniard worse than before, and sometimes we spent seasons on the plantations among the mountains, and we rode through the intendencias, he and I and Virgilio, from end to end—do you know it is a land larger than Ireland? and he taught me that I am a Cuban and never to forsake my country. And now we have nothing,—the coffee, the tobacco, the cotton, all confiscated.” And she threw out her empty hands, palms downward. “We should be beggars, Virgilio and I, but for my aunt. And she is not quite sure that we are not mad. All that we had has been given to the cause. But judge if we love Spain the more.”

“Love her!” exclaimed Harry Bentinck.
“She is the remnant of the dark ages.”

“I knew you would think so,” she said, giving him again the melting glance. “I should never have dared talk to you so freely had I not been sure of it. I felt it that day I first saw you in the Senate chamber, and I myself as well as those senators have read your speech.” And then she repeated in those liquid tones of hers, which to Harry Bentinck’s excited ears seemed sweet as a flute bubbling over water, the last paragraph of that speech of his. There was nothing more for the Señorita Gloria Campeador to do.

You may be sure that Mr. Harry Bentinck was at the opera that night. The music fed his mood. I think it was *Lucia*, and Christine Nilsson was singing it with a divine abandonment of passion that suited him. Flowers and feathers and jewels and pretty faces put the dingy little National to shame, and the young attachés down in the front row stood up and surveyed the audience through their opera glasses, and made calls between the acts, and broke in a body

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for a lower box when by one movement every eye in the house was turned upon the party entering there, and Gloria, shrouded in black lace, stood there a moment like the dark, contrasting shadow of the white beauty on the stage.

If a queen had conferred knighthood on Harry Bentinck, he would have felt less honored than he did at the inclination of that lovely head and the scarcely perceptible motion of the fan in his direction. "I have some news that makes me very happy," she murmured when he was beside her. "I had half the mind to put on my yellow satin, with my aunt's diamond butterflies —"

"I thought you were in mourning," he said, taking her fan and opening and closing it.

"For my country, only for Cuba and her sorrows. My heart is so often heavy for her. But sometimes I wear blue because it is the national color. I swathe myself from head to foot in it. But, alas," and she sighed and she laughed, "blue is not becoming to brunettes!"

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“On the contrary, I should say that it reveals and heightens their tints.”

“Ah, well, I would do more than wear blue for Cuba!” she said, still gayly. “You see, my heart is light to-night, for we hear that the *Hornito* has made harbor and landed her passengers and delivered her cargo. That is good. It was rifles, that cargo. And now there is more work to be done — more recruits, more guns — Ah, listen! How delicious, that white creature! An angel would sing that way. Tell me, why are angels always so fair, so blond?”

“I know one angel who is not blond,” exclaimed Harry Bentinck under cover of the music.

“Come and see her, then, to-morrow night at nine,” she said airily. “You need not send up your card. That is sometimes inconvenient. Simply come.” And Harry Bentinck felt that he was dismissed till to-morrow night at nine.

Madame D’Arco sat by the fire, as usual, sipping chocolate that smelled of cinnamon and musk, when on the stroke of nine he appeared. There was little other light in

the room than firelight. Two men rose as he entered. "My brother, Virgilio Campeador," said Gloria. "He passes as my aunt's courier, Johns. Johns was our mother's name. She was American, you know. And this is General Piers Petersen," as the tall, gray-haired man reseated himself. She herself took a low place near the hearth. Campeador threw a stick upon the fire, and it blazed up and illumined her face rosily a moment, and left her like a gleaming ghost. For the brief space no one spoke, and she began singing a chansonette half under her breath. "You wanted to hear about Cuba," she said presently, breaking off her song. "It is so sad I delay. How can I tell you of it all? The oppression, the infamous laws, the impoverishing taxes, the injustices — they are bad enough —"

"They are what we revolt against," said Virgilio, quietly.

"— The insults, the cruelties, the men taken out and shot before their wives, the mothers hunted in caves, the homes burned in the making of those deserts they call peace, the men bound to a stake and hacked

to pieces with knives, the men beaten to death in prison in the horrible componte!" She threw her hands up wildly, her voice rising. "Oh, the sting of it all," she cried, "the malignity, the helplessness, the misery, the grief!"

"And what amazes one is the indifference of the American," said Madame D'Arco, speaking for the first time, but in French. "Three American boys are shot down in Havana because they wear a blue ribbon at their throats —"

"In twenty years," cried Gloria, "the American will not have avenged them!"

"And the outrage of the *Virginus* — you endure it."

Mr. Bentinck felt as if he not only had endured it, but had committed it.

"But, then, if the Americans endure it, there are others who resent it. Look at Piers Petersen here," said Virgilio.

"But, to be sure, General Piers Petersen has spent his life avenging the wrongs of others!" cried Gloria again. "There has not been a rebellion, not to say a riot, since he came of age that he has not meddled with."

"I seem to be growing old now ; somewhat tired," said the deep voice of the General, with the lisp of one who more frequently spoke soft southern tones than ours. "I am sixty years old to-night."

"We will have *café brûlé*, then, to drink your health and many a birthnight to come," said Gloria. And while she was ordering the coffee and the bowl and tray the men began to speak more circumstantially concerning the chief matter of interest, each supplementing the other with statement and proof, with one story after the other, told half in whispers, of ravage and pillage and persecution, of savage treachery and merciless wrong, till Bentinck felt his blood boil. "I myself saw it," said Virgilio. "The Spaniard learns nothing. Three hundred years ago the Aztecs suffered at their hands as we suffer in Cuba now. And we, if they take us—Piers Petersen and I and others—we shall be lucky if we are simply shot like those boys on their frolic."

"But do you not see a superior duty here?" asked the listener. "Do you for-

get what your death would be to your sister?"

"Every drop of blood spilled cries to heaven!" exclaimed Virgilio. "But if I have a sister, he has a wife. And, then — who knows? — it may not be spilled. If once we can command funds for an armed ship, for men, for artillery, why, then it will be our turn."

"Come!" cried Gloria, and she had filled the silver bowl upon the tray with the *café noir*, emptying into it the contents of the sugar basin, and was flourishing her *allumette*, the flame catching the generous brandy that she poured and running over the bowl while she stood shining into something weirdly and darkly beautiful, ladling up and down what looked in the dimness of the room like liquid fire. When it had all burned out, she filled the little cups with the intensely sweet and strong result of her brewing, and they drank long life to the General.

"And as many revolutions as there are kingdoms of the earth," said Gloria as they still stood about the table. "You must

know, Mr. Bentinck, that General Piers Petersen would be undone if there were no wrongs to right, no tyrannies to overthrow, in this world. There is not a republic in South America, born in his day, that he has not assisted in the making. He was with Walker in Nicaragua, with Fremont in California. He was with Don Carlos in Spain when they hung countesses to lamp-posts, — the Spaniard, whether in revolt or revolted against, always revolting! He was with Kossuth, and he swam down the Danube on bladders, naked, with dispatches in his mouth.” As she spoke, an electric glow seemed to kindle behind the eyes of the General that burned bluer than blue diamonds are. “He has the Cuban color in his eyes; and his blood—it is the blue blood!” she cried. She filled the cups again, and they went back and gathered round the hearth, Virgilio talking, low voiced and eager, Gloria every little while emphasizing what he said, the General adding now and then a strident word.

“Oh, you sympathize, you feel for us, you are one of us!” she cried, her cheek

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flushed in the firelight, the tear sparkling in her eye; and she laid her hand on his a moment. He took it and held it, and when he left he bent and raised it to his lips, and his eyes said all his lips dared not, and the long-lashed, shining eyes of hers returned the gaze one full moment and fell again, and the soft red mouth trembled. And under the influence of the beautiful girl and her heroic impetuosity, of the ardent and convincing eloquence, of the strange, intoxicating draught, when Mr. Bentinck went his way, at an hour well into morning, he thought he understood the Cuban question thoroughly, and he had promised to aid the cause to the extent of the whole of his power and the half of his fortune.

He was still under the glamour, still full of the fervor of Gloria's enthusiasm when the next day he sat in the committee room sorting his mail, and in an angry amaze he found his desk half covered with letters from his constituents obeying the hint of Senator Bortle, the junior senator from his State, urging him, as he valued their support and his future, to resist by every means

at his command the encroachments of the Cuban sympathizers.

When Mr. Harry Bentinck entered politics, he had, perhaps, no very definite aim. He certainly did not expect to be President, as he knew that, unless when accident drops it on some great head to wear it like a crown, the Presidency usually falls, from long habit and necessity, not to the brilliant, the ardent, the great, but to the man whose colorless career has made no enemies; to the stupid, the cunning, or the obstinate; to the available. He had meant, however, to be one of the senators of his State, first of all; feeling that no one on earth held a prouder position than the senator of a sovereign State. After that he would at some time be called to the cabinet, and he would make his fame and achieve his purpose in shaping the policy of the nation to his will.

When he was weary of that, either the people would have abolished the diplomatic body altogether, relying on the consular service, or they would have raised certain posts to an ambassadorial rank, and he would pass

some years in plenipotentiary power abroad ; not a position that would allow him to be a dining and wining and speechmaking figurant, with the real business transacted over his head between the Foreign Office abroad and the State Department at home, but one requiring the best skill and knowledge and courage. He did not by any means think of himself in a small way, it will be seen ; but it was a sense of conscious power that possessed him, and not in the least one of personal vanity.

Possibly this unformulated thought, this sense of conscious power, was so strong in him that the letters of his constituents failed to produce the effect that had been intended. They were filed away unanswered for the present. He had better business in hand. It did not occur to him that he was sacrificing his future to a passion, that a politician needs a foothold in a constituency, and no statesman can do anything in the beginning unless he is raised on the shoulders of the people. All he thought was that he was not a man to fail ; that if one thing were not possible, another was ; and

that, for the rest, the love of Gloria Campeador was worth all else that destiny had to offer. And he had reached the point where he was no longer content with just the bliss of being allowed to love: he was determined to be loved again.

But now affairs were not standing still. On the contrary, they were moving with rapidity. Fiery spirits who burned for adventure or distinction were every day coming to the front, and arms were purchased and negotiations made; for whatever might be suspected of Miss Campeador's political activity, with a sort of public secrecy, it was generally regarded as the enthusiasm of a pretty woman whose social position was not to be ignored. Those who, by means of their agents, knew all things, had reasons for keeping their knowledge to themselves, and she and her friends had great latitude of initiatory movement. Later the strong hand might interfere.

It was at the dinner of a high foreign functionary, who might not even at this day care to have his name mentioned, that Mr. Bentinck, taking out another lady, found

himself seated beside Gloria. She was in dark blue velvet streaming with cut crystals like sapphires, with here and there a big diamond, glittering from head to foot like the summer sky in the dead of the dark. The melancholy of her mien and expression heightened the rapture of beauty that made the young man almost tremble as he looked at her. She was very silent, with an air half distrait, as if she were alert and listening for one knew not what.

“He goes to-night,” she murmured by and by to Bentinck, as she crumbled her bread. “My Virgilio! You will come round? Oh, yes,” she said, her head slightly bending toward him, her voice so low that only one used to its inflections could distinguish the words. “All is ready. A part sail from Key West, a part from Charleston, and they rendezvous, as it was arranged, you know. Nothing is changed. And —” Her vis-a-vis at the table, a severe and stately dame, opened her eyes just then to see the young woman empty her wineglass at a draught; but she said to herself that one should be surprised at nothing these Creole women do.

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And of course Mr. Bentinck went round. Madame D'Arco, weeping, lay back in her chair, looking like a big bundle of gorgeous rags. Gloria was in an inner room with Virgilio. Presently she came out with him. She had torn off her glittering dinner-dress, and wore a long, loose-flowing garment of some diaphanous, dark blue tissue. She was clinging to her brother's arm. But she stopped halfway to the door, pressing one hand across her eyes. "Oh, my Virgilio!" she exclaimed. "How can I bear it!"

"For our country, for the future, for my future!" he murmured.

She drew down his head, kissing his forehead, and threw herself upon his breast with a storm of sobs, her hair falling from its comb and enveloping her in its black cloud.

There came a rap upon the door; her brother loosened the clenched hands, still holding them, and turned to Madame D'Arco, who, a fountain pouring rivers of tears in silence, had risen to embrace him. Then once more he took Gloria in his arms.

“Oh, mother of God!” she cried. “If you should not come back, Virgilio!”

“Do not let her faint,” he said to Bentinck. “I had best go now.” He looked at Harry fixedly a moment. “I leave her to you,” he said, and was gone.

And Bentinck took her, too sacred in her sorrow to think of that moment in relation to himself, and laid her on the lounge, while Madame D’Arco bustled after some salts. She lay there quietly till the clock seemed to startle her with its stroke. She slowly opened her eyes, full of gloom, of grief, and of tenderness, and looked at him kneeling beside her.

“I have no one left but you!” she said. And then, in spite of himself, he bent and kissed her faltering lips. There was nothing said of love or marriage; her head lay on his shoulder, he clasped her in his arms, a long hour of trance. Madame D’Arco slept, more or less audibly, in her chair, worn out with emotion.

At length he laid the girl gently back upon the cushions and pulled over her the cloak of sables lying there, and stepping

across the room touched Madame D'Arco's hand and roused her, since when he was gone the door should be locked. "Let her sleep," he said. "To-morrow I shall have a petition to make to you. Sleep well, yourself, dear madame, and good angels guard you."

Gloria kept a dreamless slumber the rest of that night, but stirred at dawn and went to her own room. When later in the day she woke, her maid had come in and filled the place with white roses; but the flowers that lay upon her pillow were a stem of orange blossoms.

When Mr. Bentinck appeared at the Arlington that afternoon the world had turned ever so slightly upon its axis. Gloria was no longer in tears, but radiant. The carriage was waiting for her, and she was going to lunch with some South Americans, her dress of white cloth braided in silver hidden by her enveloping cloak, but her white picture-hat very much in evidence, with its high flaring brim overtopped by big bunches of white ostrich plumes. All her dashing coquetry had returned to her —

whether she thought nothing could have happened to Virgilio yet, or whether her gayety was assumed to mislead suspicion as to his departure.

“Your flowers are sweet. They always are,” she said. “But, *au reste*—I must have time to consider. I cannot take advantage, you know,” she said with an intimate sweetness, “of your sympathy, your compassion. So you are pledged to nothing—to nothing, that is, but Cuba.”

And then the soft and brilliant smile seemed to belie the words. She gave him her hand in farewell; but she came back again, saying, “You are not offended? You are always my friend?”

“No!” he said. “I will not be your friend. I will be your lover, your husband, or nothing!”

“But you will be Cuba’s friend?” she said, looking anxiously in his face. And then she tiptoed, for tall as she was he was taller, and kissed him on the mouth, and was away. And whether she was his betrothed or not, the bewildered Mr. Bentinck was not able to say. And it so happened,

or was so arranged, that he did not see her alone again for several days.

Nevertheless Mr. Bentinck contrived to be present wherever the beautiful Cuban went; for his attractive personality, his wealth, his apparent possibilities, had made him a favorite in society, and he had not yet had to ask for anything, so ready was every one to confer. He felt a strong desire to surround her now with his own people; and he was surprised when, having sent a note to Mrs. MacMichael, a personage of the gay world and the wife of his old Senator, to receive in reply her card, saying she was waiting for him in her carriage, and to have her begin as soon as he was seated beside her, "Now, what is all this I hear? And what does your note mean? And why should I call on a Spanish adventuress?"

"She is not an adventuress, she is not Spanish, and there is no reason why you should call if you do not wish, and I will bid you good morning," he said, putting his hand on the carriage door.

"Stop, you hotheaded fellow!" said Mrs. MacMichael, cheerfully. "Aren't you

ashamed of yourself? Who has been your friend the longer, I or Miss Campeador?"

"Mrs. MacMichael, if you wish me to listen to you, you will leave Miss Campeador's name out of the conversation."

"Is it really so bad as that?" she said. "You poor boy. I really don't know if there is such a pitiable thing going as an unmarried man without a sister or any other feminine adviser. If you had a mother, or even a mother-in-law — but there is no help for it. I shall have to be a mother-in-law to you for the nonce; you are one of the Senator's boys, you know. I must ask you, I must implore you, not to ruin your whole outlook by this madness! You know very well," she went on, in spite of his effort to prevent her, "you know very well you are in training for MacMichael's place — and it may fall to you sooner than you think. But you will never have it — you will not even be returned to your seat in the House if you offend the people at home. They are powerful enemies, and their interests, MacMichael says, are the interests of your district. Of course their agent here has had

his eyes on you, and has kept them informed, as it is. But you can stop just where you are. What is a flirtation more or less? Now, my dear boy," continued Mrs. MacMichael, still a very pretty woman herself, laying her hand on his arm, "there are a million pretty women in the world, foreign and domestic. Why throw away a whole lifetime and its splendid possibilities on simply one of them?"

"Mrs. MacMichael, you and I are too long and too dear friends to quarrel," said Harry Bentinck, his face downcast and flushing, — the face that was so exactly like the armless Hermes that there had been quite a sale for the cast since he came to Washington. "But it is not worth while to say any more. I am not authorized, you are not authorized, to use this young lady's name. But the question behind all the matter is one that has been brought to my attention, and has been decided on its own merits —"

"Oh!" said Mrs. MacMichael, derisively.

"I should be unable to be an American," he exclaimed, "and believe in the divine

right of the people if I did not sympathize with the heroes —”

“Oh, it is hopeless!” said Mrs. Mac-Michael. “I suppose there are no Spanish heroes, no Spanish rights —”

“None that I know of,” said Harry Bentinck.

“Of course not.”

“And if there were, I am not concerned with them.”

“And you believe the statements of the unsupported, irresponsible insurgents, these knight errants of vagrant patriotism, rather than the evidence of your own senses regarding the rich and populous and flourishing dependency whose commerce shows its good government! I heard the Senator say so.”

“Revolution is unknown under good government. And nothing was ever well-governed by Spain. Have not all the South Americas escaped from her bondage? Has she not driven out of her borders every one who ever had intelligence, or large thought, or any capacity — the Moor when he had most of the learning of the world; the Jew with his wealth; the Protestant with his in-

tellect? Is she not still in the narrow ruts of her bigotry? Would it surprise you to see the Inquisition set up again in a land where they still cling passionately to the bullfight?"

"How can you talk so of a people with whom we are at peace? And the Spanish minister and his wife are charming, are most estimable! I dined with them last week."

"They are to be promoted for their efficient work of that sort, I hear."

Mrs. MacMichael looked out of the window in some perplexity. "Well," she said, "I did n't come to argue with you. I came to ask you to drive with me to Miss Campeador's."

"With pleasure, provided you do not speak to her of—"

"What do you think of me? That I would ask a young lady not to marry you?"

"It might be as well to wait till you knew that I myself had asked her to do so."

"Then it is not a fixed—then you have not—"

“One thing that I have done is to give notice that I shall to-morrow ask the attention of the House to some remarks upon a resolution in favor of according belligerent rights to the Cubans.”

“I think we will drive home. Johnson—home!” And Mrs. MacMichael threw herself back in the corner of the carriage and did not speak till it drew up before the K street house, and Mr. Bentinck sprang out and took off his hat and offered her his hand to descend.

“How very silly you are!” she said then. “How very silly we both are! Come back. I am going to the Arlington.”

And at the Arlington it turned out that the young Creole’s mother, Virginia Johns, had been the dear schoolgirl friend of Mrs. MacMichael’s youth. And on the day of Mr. Bentinck’s speech there would have been no more excited and enthusiastic listener than Mrs. MacMichael, who, had she dared risk her husband’s good report at home, would have had Gloria Campeador beside her in the gallery, and would have sent to Mr. Bentinck the great bunch of roses

which she carried, and would have taken them both home to dine with her, and to hear a long dissertation from the Senator, who, having decided not to stand for another term, would have been better pleased if Harry Bentineck had not made himself an impossible successor.

“I have had news,” said Gloria, meeting him radiantly a few mornings afterwards. “It is only a scrap that Virgilio has sent me. They are off. Oh, I have said all my prayers! And now I must go tell my news. General Piers Petersen left his wife here, did you know? He thought he had done with filibustering, and he married over here a little woman with a plantation. Well, the war knocked all that to pieces. But then he had the war, you know, and that almost paid him. He ‘snuffed delight of battle.’ I am on my way to see her. Are you going with me? It is a shame that I should live at the Arlington and dress like a princess — but it is my aunt, my aunt who has the money and who maintains that I serve the cause better so, and who does n’t care so much about the cause anyway as she does

about me—a shame, and the dear little Piers Petersen woman living at the top of a lodging house. I have been so busy converting senators and secretaries I have not had time to see her.”

It was quite at the top of Mrs. McQueen’s extension that they found Mrs. Piers Petersen in a little hall-chamber. She was wrapped in a shawl, for there was no fire; but she was rosy and smiling. “I had to let you up,” she said, “for I didn’t know but you had news. I am always hoping to hear that recruits have rendezvoused on the Central American shores, and that some millionaire has given us a couple of swift cruisers with guns, and that we have broken down the coastguard and carried all before us. Have you news? As for me, I never have. The General never writes; he just appears; usually he has just failed again.”

“Is this—is this—” began Gloria.

“How I live? Yes. But then, you know, I am just waiting. It is—that is—I mean—I—” and she suddenly began to cry. “Oh, what sort of thing is this for a soldier’s wife! But—but—you know—

your nerves might give out, too, if you had eaten nothing but apples for a week — ”

“ Stop a moment ! ” exclaimed Gloria. “ Do you mean to say that you have eaten nothing but apples for a week ? Then I will eat nothing but apples for a week ! ”

“ You foolish child,” said Mrs. Piers Petersen, who, being the wife of a soldier, was superior to the unmarried maid, even if she were the sister of a soldier, and superior anyway by reason of the starvation on apples, “ don’t you see that the apple business is my monopoly ? ” and she laughed in the midst of her tears, like a child.

“ Well, we can’t encourage monopolies,” said Gloria, gayly, “ we who are all for freedom. And so you will come out and have lunch with me. And — ”

“ No. You may lend me a little money if you will. But I will stay here. He will expect to find me here.”

“ All the money you want. And I will tell you my good news as we go.”

“ You have good news ? Then I don’t want the money ! I will comfort me with apples until he comes. He always comes.”

“I think we shall have to take this into our own hands,” said Mr. Bentinck.

And the little woman had no choice but to go with them for a lunch and an afternoon of *Faust*, and when she came home her room was filled with hyacinths and tulips, and under the tulips was a little stack of gold pieces, which she saved religiously for the time when the General should come and find her there.

But zealously concerned as Mr. Bentinck had become in the cause for which he had hazarded so much, he was considerably more concerned about himself. That Gloria was simply making use of him, was trolling him and his influence along in creating capital for her cause, and that she was capable of throwing him over like a flower she had worn till it withered, when it suited her purposes, had indeed crossed his mind. And then he had reproached himself for his unfaithful fancies regarding this pure and ardent creature, who had refused to allow him to be pledged, and yet gave him such absolute confidence.

He had remembered, too, that in matters of marriage there is far more reserve in the

habits of the Spanish-American people than in our own ; and he assured himself that she was his, that she had sealed the unspoken promise with her lips, remembrance of which moment made his heart stand still a second, and in the abasement over his ill-doing he redoubled his silent devotion and asked nothing but to be allowed to serve her. He went about his congressional duties abstractedly, and when any of the men he met essayed to jest with him on the subject of the reports they heard, their jests glanced off his unconsciousness like missent arrows.

He was, however, aware that his colleagues had begun to look at him with that easy contempt which men have for one who abandons the obvious and material for the immaterial ; but it only made him shrug his shoulders and think there were better things than their material, and resolve that he would have their material and his immaterial too.

And in the meantime he danced with Gloria. He dined with her ; he took afternoon walks and he took afternoon chocolate

with her ; and they often went across to Mrs. MacMichael's for the hour before twilight. They were there together one day, and the Senator had come in and had been chaffing Harry a little about his wasted opportunities.

"You will have to be picking out a place abroad, Bentinck," he said. "There's nothing on this side for you. Bortle has cooked your goose. You'll find it easier to resign your seat than to face your friends at home. You can't have London or Paris ; they're occupied. And you're too young. But I suppose you could get Spain," he said slyly.

"Do you imagine we would go to that unnameable country ?" cried Gloria. And the "we" made Harry's pulses leap. She had never been more beautiful than she was at that moment. The excitement under which she lived, for she was hourly expecting word which should already have come from Virgilio, kept her eyes burning and her ivory pallor warm with an added life.

The day had been one of the delicious days that often come to Washington in mid-

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winter, like spring days wandering backward, filling the air with rich earth scents and touching the buds to swelling, the soft wind seeming to blow out of some unknown region of Paradise, and at its close, at last, in a dreamy mist, a thundergust had gathered and had broken while they waited here ; and then the sunset had burst over the high heaven, as if a vast ruby had let out its secret, transfiguring the pillared marbles and making the dome of the Capitol only a rosy cloud.

The crimson light fell through the drawing-room windows and kindled what seemed a new depth in Gloria's smile, and made one think of Galatea glowing from marble to flesh.

She turned to look out at the splendor of light and exclaimed, as a carriage at that moment stopped below, "Why, there is my aunt ! And who — why, it is the little apple-woman. Oh, it is General Piers Petersen ! He is back — so soon — They have failed ! They have failed ! And where, where, where is Virgilio ?"

Almost as she spoke Madame D'Arco was

in the room, majestic that moment with love, with grief, with compassion, her arms outstretched to Gloria, and the General towering behind her.

Gloria flung out her hands as if to ward them off. "I know it all!" she cried, as if that might hinder them.

"Yes," said the General, and was silent.

"My Gloria, my Gloria!" sobbed Madame D'Arco.

"Tell her, tell her, General!" cried his wife. "Oh, Mrs. MacMichael!"

"There was treachery," said the General, his voice deep with strange intonations. "The boat was scuttled. As we rose on the roller in sight of shore she filled. Some of us reached the Key and were taken off by a passing schooner. That is how I am here. But he—there must have been a blow—he sank—he was thrown ashore. I myself heaped the sands over that head." And Gloria fell to the floor, as if the treacherous blow that slew Virgilio had struck her—as the statue she had that instant seemed might have fallen.

It was a week before they could tell

Harry Bentinek that Gloria would live. The congressional world saw nothing of him in that time; he spent the greater part of it in walking up and down Mrs. MacMichael's drawing-rooms. But when that message was brought to him he bade Mrs. MacMichael good-by and disappeared, and General Piers Petersen disappeared with him.

He went at once to Baltimore and found a yacht, which happened to be in commission for a Mediterranean cruise, and taking the necessary people and appurtenances along, sailed directly for the Key where Virgilio was buried, finding it with little difficulty, evading a Spanish gunboat's interest in the proceeding, and returning with what he sought encased in triple steel.

And then there was a solemn requiem mass in St. Matthew's, with the whole splendor of the Church and its music; with the chiefs of the Cuban Junta and certain high dignitaries in attendance; and out in the Rock Creek burial-ground Harry Bentinek placed one long palm-branch on the young hero's grave and a wreath, every star

of which was a blossom of the Flower of the Holy Ghost.

Gloria lay on a lounge surrounded by the flowers he had sent her, armfuls of white lilacs, white herself as the death she had escaped, her long hair streaming almost to her feet, when, the day after this, he was admitted to her presence.

She looked at him a moment, saying nothing, and giving him her thin hand ; and then the eyelids fell and two great tears welled out. He would have kissed them away, but he dared not. He was not very certain of his own standing in those days. He only touched with his lips the finger-tips of the hand he held. And he presently told her of the yesterday's music and of the grave. He had the choir come the next day and sing for her a part of the music, the doors open from room to room, the voice of a prima donna who was then in town soaring like a rising soul through it all. He came again the following morning, sitting in a low seat by the lounge, and told her of the voyage and of the reef and the long roll of the Caribbean waters that had entombed

Virgilio, where the sapphire deepened to amethyst, and broke to beryl, and powdered in diamond spray upon the coral rock.

And on another day he brought her a miniature he had had painted from a photograph of Virgilio that Mrs. Piers Petersen had. He came every afternoon and stayed as long as he could make excuse. He longed for her to confess herself able to drive out, in those vernal days when the immense sky of Washington is full of the high white light, and the air is full of the sweetness of green grass and violets and hyacinths and spring life.

But one day he went in with more determination. Her life perhaps depended on it, he said; he would allow no false delicacy to stand in the way. Mrs. MacMichael went into the adjoining room where Madame D'Arco was sitting. "I think," he said gently to Gloria, "that it is absolutely necessary you should have a change. If you stay here you will never recover—"

"I do not know that I want to recover," she sighed.

"I want you to do so," he said. "And

you must come away with me for it. You must break off all these associations. You must put the mourning, the past, behind you. You must come over seas and begin a new life—with me, Gloria.”

Tears swam up as she lay there, and clouded the splendor of the great black eyes. “There is something I will say to you,” she said slowly, after a little while. “Perhaps when you have heard it you will want nothing more of me. I have put the past behind me, as you say;—my brother, till I see him again;—the freedom of Cuba till a more fortunate day. But that is not it. You must not look at me or I cannot say it! It is this: When I first let you love me—when I—when you—when I kissed you—I did not love you. Oh, it is shame to me! I thought only of my country, and I thought of what your influence might be in delaying hostile action; in intimidating the Administration ever so little and giving us time; in bringing other friends in your train; in adding to our strength and numbers. And I thought of your money and of our need of gunboats and of guns. I

thought nothing of you — almost nothing, that is. You see, I did not love you then. I let you think I did. You can never trust me again. And now, now, I will tell you — it is shame, it is humiliation, and you can cast me off if you will — but I love you with my whole heart and soul !” And the next moment the face that she had turned to the wall was caught back between his hands and was covered with his kisses, and life was pouring through all her veins again.

There was a very private ceremony at Mrs. MacMichael’s not long after that ; and Mrs. Harry Bentinck took a certain proud pleasure in making a wedding journey to Havana, where, as the wife of an American Member of Congress, very beautiful, very languid, very sumptuously arrayed, she could defy all the power of Spain with impunity.

It was not, however, a long visit, for it was not altogether safe ; and besides that, she had no idea of her husband’s resigning his seat in Congress. On the whole, the Cuban business had given him credit both for enthusiasm and sincerity ; it was under-

stood that he was owned by none of the great interests. Having occasion to do some important service for the Administration before his term was over, he had a powerful backing when he went in for Mr. MacMichael's seat in the Senate and won.

Mrs. Harry Bentinck carried matters with rather a high hand during her husband's senatorial service ; and sometimes when she met the wife of the Spanish Minister there seemed to be battle royal in the air for a moment ; averted, however, by the sweet frigidity that reduced the surrounding temperature below the necessary heat of conflict. But the latter years have been passed abroad, where her husband has held important posts, and where, whenever there has been a chance to throw a strong light upon Spanish policies, she has not wasted the opportunity.

I met Mrs. Harry Bentinck the other day in Washington, as beautiful, as imperial as ever, and it brought her story to mind. I hardly thought she had come over with the simple purpose of seeing her children, who are here at school in the resolve that they

shall be reared only as Americans. And one may be quite sure that, whatever may be going on to-day in Cuban affairs, Gloria is in the midst of it, and if, during the recent war, a much-talked-of note from the concerted foreign powers was never delivered to our Government, it is not at all impossible that it was because Mrs. Harry Bentinck laid a detaining finger on it.

IV

A Little Old Woman



A Little Old Woman

MRS. SPENCE had come up from Mississippi, and after many vicissitudes was at last occupying a hall chamber at Mrs. McQueen's boarding-house, where Beau, her man-servant, had some occasional occupation.

Once Mrs. Spence had been a beauty — a dark and gentle beauty, with a spark in the darkness. Now the rose had withered, the eyelid drooped; she had come to look like the cameo she had worn, where, behind the white outlines cut to exquisite thinness on the black onyx, a flame seemed to burn with tremulous restlessness. Her manners were those of some sceptreless queen relying on tradition of old and gentle authority, and her broken voice had in it the sweetness of a flute.

Her business in Washington had relation to a claim for damages to her late husband's property on the South Fork of the Big

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Ocala, where a detachment of Federal troops had destroyed crops, scattered slaves, and burned buildings—business that she was about as well fitted to conduct as any little black fly might have been.

It would appear that, the alluvial deposit along the South Fork of the Big Ocala being fifty feet deep and of an inexhaustible richness, never were such crops raised elsewhere; and surely there never was such a home as the white mansion, with its pillared porches set high among magnolias and live-oaks, above thickets of crape-myrtle. In the evenings and at the table Mrs. Spence spoke concerning these things, and sometimes also concerning the excellences of Major Spence, hinting rather than enlarging. Perhaps she could not enlarge upon the subject of Major Spence to strangers; all the less if by chance there were in her subliminal consciousness the least flaw in the godship of the god.

But every one believed her; those of the South because, of course, it must have been so; and those of the North because long reverence for that sort of superior thing

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made it difficult to doubt; and all because of the truth and innocence marking the little old woman. And when one adventurous person hazarded a question as to whether her three hundred acres on the Big Ocala were more than a patch on a wheat-field forty miles square that he had seen on the Pacific coast, the house rose in her defence; and none more vigorously than did Miss Sarah Woodbury, a haughty young woman from Massachusetts, and Miss Raleigh Cunnor, a haughtier young lady from Virginia.

Miss Sarah, desiring a warmer climate for her throat, and hearing that women were employed in the Departments, had trusted in what was vaguely called influence, had drawn her little hoard from the savings-bank, and had come down to try her fortunes in Washington. And Miss Raleigh, believing that a person from the State which was the mother of Presidents had a right to whatever she would condescend to accept, had some time ago secured a position.

Giving gage of battle on other subjects, these young ladies united in defence of Mrs.

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Spence's plantation from any Pacific-coast aspersion. And Miss Sarah invited the little lady to warm her feet at her open fire, thinking at first that she would improve her guest's mind with a chapter from Thoreau, but deciding that she would rummage up and darn her stockings instead, while their owner excitedly told over again her histories.

"Major Spence," said Mrs. Spence, just before rising to go, warmed with her memories and her listeners' interest, "was a man of high standards. It—it pains me sometimes to think that perhaps in the later years I did not altogether reach them."

Miss Raleigh followed her to the hall bedroom with a glass of hot sangaree. It was one of those nights when, after the fruit has flowered, the wind wheels round into the north and blows as if the unseen agencies of cold had a spite against all the light and lustre and leafiness, the perfume and warmth of spring in Washington. "It's mighty tasty after you're in bed," said Miss Raleigh, stirring the sangaree. "Now, I'll put out your gas—'deed I will!" And she kissed her good-night.

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“There ain’t any one kissed me,” Mrs. Spence cried after her, in a faltering tone, “since before the wah. I — reckon you mustn’t kiss me again; it’s just too exciting!”

Miss Raleigh did kiss her again, and at once. Miss Sarah might have thought it was the sangaree that was exciting, but Miss Raleigh knew it was the kiss.

“I declare,” said Miss Sarah, when the other returned, “it is all on such a scale that if it was n’t for that California man I wouldn’t believe there was any place at all!”

“She believes it,” said Miss Raleigh, nodding her bright head emphatically.

“You’re so sure of it you almost make me believe it too.”

“My gracious! If the Nohth and Sooth had had us to settle it there wouldn’t have been any wah!”

“No. You can wile a bird from off a bough. How do you do it?”

“Oh, ‘conjuh.’”

“I remember thinking when I first saw you,” said Miss Sarah, shaking out her

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work, "that you had the sweetest little accent —"

"Oh, accent! I'm so tired hearing about accent! Why isn't it you that have the accent?"

"Well, accent or not, it's charming — all your innocent short a's, and r's turned into h's, and the lost digammas of your final g's, and your sweet, musical drawl."

"I'm not sure if you're insultin' or not. But what a heap you know!" cried Miss Raleigh. "Oh, your broad a's and things seem so unfinished, and certainly a descendant of the Cumnors, of Cumnor Hall —"

"Come to that, and I am a descendant of the gods!"

"And no less!"

"Woodbury is Woden's borough. And Woden means —"

"You make me afraid of you! Where do you keep your thunderbolts?"

And then the clock struck, and Miss Sarah put up her red morocco housewife, and Miss Raleigh ran away.

This was not Mrs. Spence's first winter in Washington by any means. She had

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entered Major Spence's claim shortly after peace had been declared. Dissatisfied with her lawyer because he gave his services, because he was young, and because she had known Sammy Pleasants ever since he was born — perhaps, also, because Sammy Pleasants had known Major Spence — she had taken another. This individual had been succeeded by a third. And then, on contingent fees, had passed a procession of claim agents. The difficulties, the doubts, the disappointments, the defeats, had shaken her. Or had they shaken the plantation? For it had lately stretched its borders, and Mrs. Spence had spoken of it as if it were possibly a thousand acres, and the soil had penetrated all of eighty feet toward the earth's centre.

“Of course,” Mrs. Spence said, “if it were not a big affair Major Spence's name would not be connected with it. And the opportunities it afforded him of doing good! Oh, I am sure he improved them!”

Mrs. McQueen had met Mrs. Spence two or three years before this, in the parlor at Willard's, where the little woman was call-

ing on a grand lady in the hope of securing her influence with some of those in authority. Mrs. McQueen, who was waiting to see the clerk for the purpose of letting her rooms to any overflow of his guests, heard the soft rustle of the old silk and was attracted by the sweetness of a small, pale face with eyes like two drops of midnight dew, and by the refinement of the tone in which the bell-boy had been addressed ; possibly, also, by the presence of the imposing colored man, who stood with folded arms at a respectful distance.

The grand lady of the hour kept Mrs. Spence waiting, and Mrs. McQueen made room for her at the fire. And when she had acknowledged the courtesy, and Mrs. McQueen, herself a timid creature, had reassured her, somehow Mrs. Spence found herself launched upon the story of her wrongs.

“ If,” said the soft voice, with its lingering undertone of melancholy, “ it had been just the fortune of wah I should accept it. But it was not wah. You belong, perhaps, to the more Nohthe’n people, and I will not say

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too much. Yet even our servants — nó, nó, it would be rude. But the house to which Major Spence brought me when I was a bride — the beautiful old house where I had such happiness — to see it make a bonfire before my face !” The tears overflowed her eyes while she spoke, as dew overflows a flower.

“It is shameful !” assented Mrs. McQueen. “There should be full payment.”

“Oh, no, I do not ask payment for that. Beau and the others put out the fire. There came a Nohther with a cloud-burst, too. I do not ask restitution ; I would not accept it. Money,” said the little person, with an indescribable dignity, “could not repay me for such loss, for such irreverence to the memory of Major Spence. They tore down my curtains — they were draperies that Major Spence’s father bought in Paris after the sack of the Tuileries. But we would have restored them if we had known how. They tossed his books into the fire — the books Major Spence took such pleasure in reading aloud, as we sat with the lamps inside the mosquito-house. He was a beautiful reader, and there were many occasions when we

were quite by ourselves, especially after Major Spence had been over in New Orleans dining with friends and was not feeling quite up to the mark. They shrivelled in the fire — ‘The Spectator,’ ‘The Life of Dr. Johnson,’ ‘The Vicar of Wakefield,’ ‘The Complete Works of Lord Byron,’ ‘The Historical Plays of William Shakespeare.’ Oh, there were more than fifty of them! And they broke up my piano — the piano where I used to play to Major Spence in the twilight! I can see him now with the tear on his cheek when I sang ‘Oft in the Stilly Night.’ Major Spence was very sensitive — the music, the hour, the breath of the cape jessamines. He was a little older than I. He sometimes regretted — he had no one to direct his youth — I mean — it affected him to think I might be left alone. He told Beau, my negro man there, not to lose sight of me in a waking hour. It is because the place was the home of Major Spence, and the home of his father, that I feel as I do. As for me, a woman endures much. But I was the wife of Major Spence; I am his relict. There are rights and properties

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belonging to Major Spence's wife, and the claim I am making is for the destruction of his crops and stores. But I find it difficult to secure justice without influence."

The grand dame dismissed Mrs. Spence with scant ceremony, and Mrs. McQueen overtook and went along with her. She was crying softly. "Oh, if Major Spence were living," she exclaimed, finding her friendly listener beside her, "she would not have spoken in that manner! We used to go over to New Orleans every winter and stay at the St. Charles ourselves; and not a gentleman in the big rotunda but felt flattered if Major Spence invited him to—to join him. Not, I beg you to believe, that Major Spence was a drinking man; but among gentlemen—you know. Those days are gone. But if the Government—oh, if you had ever seen the plantation when all the tender green was springing far and near, and the mansion was full of company, and Major Spence so proud and pleased—so pleased with me, too; the house at night lighted in every room, and the music of the flutes and fiddles and banjoes (for we had

excellent musicians among the hands), oh you would know how bitter it is to have such pleasure come to an end! The wah took Major Spence, and we could never have the sweet, gay life again. But if I might only stay where I had it, and call its ghosts about me — Ah! there is my lawyer coming; pray excuse me, or may I introduce him — Mr. Pleasants? His father was one of the Government agents in the removal of the Seminoles. Mr. Pleasants is a scion of one of our very first families.”

Mr. Pleasants was a pallid, slender youth, with an eager, smiling face, full of the desire to help. He afterwards came to lodge with Mrs. McQueen. But by that time he had been replaced in Mrs. Spence's services by an oily and untidy individual in oily and untidy clothes, who had a way of lurking around corners and of wiping his lips furtively, as if conscious of too recent refreshments.

“Very eminent, I assure you,” Mrs. Spence had whispered once, meeting Mrs. McQueen again. “Of course, in the celebrated case of Pinmoney versus Alimony he

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is reticent ; but it was he who advised in the successful prosecution of the Government's right to the Wigwam Lands."

Possibly some portion of the Wigwam Lands still clung to the adviser's personality. But his mental processes were not apparently nicer. "They have an itching palm, these congressmen," he was saying.

"But, Mr. Jannon," she was replying, "I am not willing to propose any motive of self-interest to those who have the lofty responsibility —"

"Don't misunderstand me, madame," Mr. Jannon interrupted. "You will not suspect me of that. The crude is not always necessary. But there are expenses — legitimate — I promise you. A lunch, an invitation to the bar, a paper to be copied —"

"Well, well, if it is not a question of any impropriety, I know Major Spence would want the case presented in the most gentlemanly way. And I will have —"

"The money !"

She hesitated at the bold word. "Yes ; this evening. But you know — I have told you — my means are very limited."

OLD WASHINGTON

Mrs. McQueen, shy to suffering, felt it would be criminal to leave the little lady in the hands of this footpad, and summoned courage to speak. Mrs. Spence turned upon her with a quick movement of irritation. "I fear," she said, "that any intrusion upon the affairs of Major Spence—" And Mrs. McQueen drew back dismayed, as if a bird had flown in her face, although the apology was swift and quavering.

Perhaps the admonition was useful, however, for Mr. Jannon was before long supplanted by a jaunty personage of excessive promises. He protested that this great Government was not robbing widows; the claim would be allowed in its entirety when properly presented, and he asked nothing till then. Of course, there were items of expenditure requiring attention, but in the aggregate of such a property they were only a temporary inconvenience, and then capitalists could easily be interested in restoring affairs. And for a time Mrs. Spence trod on air. She indulged herself in one or two extravagances—a new binding for her skirt, a dime to a blind beggar, a flask of

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Farina cologne, the elegant perfume of her youth.

“Don’t talk to me, Captain Pleasants,” she said, when the young man from whose hands she had long since taken her case ventured to renew his advice. “Mr. Bumblecombe is my attorney. He is a man of the proudest honor.”

“Dear Mrs. Spence,” said young Pleasants, “what has his honor to do with the Government?”

“He has pledged it that —”

“I suppose he carries the United States in his pocket!”

“Sammy Pleasants,” cried Mrs. Spence, in an exasperation, fluttering all her draperies, “I shall not come for an opinion to a boy I rocked in his cradle.”

“All right, Mrs. Spence; we won’t talk of it. I am going across to Harvey’s for some steamed oysters; won’t you come with me? If you won’t take mine, I want your advice.”

Mrs. Spence did not hesitate. Her breakfast had been a biscuit, and her dinner would be another, although terrapin and cham-

pagne might figure at Mr. Bumblecombe's repast; and steamed oysters were inviting. Going into a restaurant with Sammy Pleasants, too, would have been foreign to the custom of her earlier day, but it was not that which hindered her. Sammy Pleasants, she was sure, had very little more in his pockets than she had in her small bag, and not for a banquet dressed by Michael Scott would she have impinged on that little more. Moreover, she was banqueting on expectation, and hope and joy were her convives.

"Thank you, Sammy," she said gently; "some time I may look for the pleasure of lunching with you at Beaumarais, but to-day I have an appointment. Good-morning. I hope you will enjoy the oysters." And she went on, hungry but content.

When Sammy Pleasants next met Mrs. Spence she was looking less blithe. Indeed, she was very downcast.

"Do you know," she said, "I hardly think Major Spence would have me submit to these trials. If I had anything but the plantation and the claim I should be tempted to drop the whole business."

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“The best day’s work you could possibly do, Mrs. Spence,” emphatically said the uncompromising Sammy.

“It is the alternations,” she continued, feeling the relief of her slender plaint, “that are so wearying. Still,” she added, brightening, “there is always some blue in the sky. I can’t tell you the pleasure it recently gave me to receive an anonymous letter—and you know we do not think well of anonymous letters usually—speaking most appreciatively of Major Spence, and inclosing a ten-dollar treasury note as part payment of an old obligation.”

Sammy Pleasants’ face was as pink as a peach.

“Some debt of honor, I suppose,” she said. “You know that Major Spence often lost quite considerable sums at cards; often, in the kindness of his great heart, to some one who could not otherwise be helped.”

“Yes, Mrs. Spence,” said Sammy, feeling himself watched narrowly, “the Major loved his jack-pot.”

“I am afraid I do not understand you,” with gentle austerity.

“Why, but you just said so yourself, Mrs. Spence.”

“I did? However, the colloquialisms of the day are very expressive.”

“They seem to cover a great deal of ground,” said Sammy.

“I thought at first,” she resumed, “before reading the letter, that the United States treasury people did not know of Major Spence’s death — although I can hardly realize such ignorance of important occurrences — and had sent him the note as a specimen of fine engraving. I feared then, afterward, that a greenback, as I think they call it, might not be good money. But I took advice. And it was so satisfactory to offer it as a retaining fee — ”

“Has Mr. — Mr. Bumblecombe — ”

“Oh, Sammy Pleasants, you were quite right about Mr. Bumblecombe! He is no longer my adviser. He — he was not a gentleman. Now Colonel Sharkey — ”

“Mrs. Spence! You don’t mean to say old Sharkey — ”

“I can’t allow you to proceed,” holding up a shabby little forbidding hand. “I

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hardly know why you feel so much at liberty to criticise my choice of counsel. Colonel Sharkey is — is an old acquaintance. And he is — he is most respectable.”

Close-shaven, erect, pompous; his coat not new, but brushed and buttoned; his linen not new, either, but pared on the edges and white; his hat also not new, but once tall and shining; and his manners, moreover, not new, but severe, as ill befits those that go down on the great deep of politics, Colonel Sharkey was trying to make his way under unfamiliar conditions. Reconciled to the conqueror, he had taken the iron-clad oath, and now took also whatever came in his way. And the ten-dollar treasury note with which Sammy Pleasants had meant to make Mrs. Spence glad had done double duty, and had made Colonel Sharkey glad too.

Another summer had passed, when Mrs. McQueen, being in the Capitol, and passing the senatorial reception-room, saw Mrs. Spence sitting on the edge of one of the sofas there, sadness and fatigue marking her worn little face, and her crapes limper than

ever. Hating her own errand, her heart palpitating at anything of the sort, Mrs. McQueen was glad of an excuse for delay.

"I hope your affairs are prospering," she said, as, after the greeting, Mrs. Spence, with ceremonious graciousness, made room beside herself.

"No," said Mrs. Spence. "It seems that a great government like this—although I understand the United States never does pay interest," she interpolated, with some irrelevant mental process, "cannot stop to render justice to a woman. Possibly it conceives that it is dealing not with a woman, but with a man. And a man of Major Spence's prominence, a landowner on so large a scale, an officer of the Confederacy;—I do not allow myself to doubt that Major Spence's claim will eventually be recognized."

"Oh," murmured Mrs. McQueen, in her pretty, breathless way, "I do hope so!"

"But it is unpleasant," Mrs. Spence continued, "to find one's self among the women who make a business of calling out the senators. Sometimes I think they are

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not — not in good taste ; but then I am not a judge, I acknowledge. I never exactly saw what Major Spence found to admire in those young Creole — I mean — However, that is neither here nor there.” Her face grew darker.

“No,” said Mrs. McQueen, quickly. “I came myself to collect some money due me, and I know how painful —”

“I am trusting,” said Mrs. Spence, reassured by the sympathy, “to secure assistance from Senator Sumner. I am afraid I may have worn out my own people. It is disagreeable and hard to solicit favors from the enemy — the conquering enemy ; yet I feel it due to Major Spence that I should leave no stone unturned. The claim has already been mentioned in the newspapers. It has acquired a national importance, and so I have sent my card to Senator Sumner.”

“I am afraid you don’t know that Mr. Sumner never receives cards in the Senate chamber,” said Mrs. McQueen. “It is really of no use. Won’t you go with me on my errand, and then come home and lunch ? It would give me such pleasure.”

“My dear,” said Mrs. Spence, “this is not my hour for lunching, thank you. And do you suppose I have been all this time busy with affairs not to know more about them than — than another? Perhaps the Senator does not see every one. But the widow of Major Spence, of Mississippi, will hardly be refused. Not, my dear,” seeing the flush on Mrs. McQueen’s cheek, “that I do not appreciate your kindly intention. But I am quite sure that the Senator — Must you go? Good-morning.”

Mrs. McQueen had troubles of her own, and she did not see Mrs. Spence again until one day in the spring, when she came across her in the market. The market was even then a wonderful place, with birds and game and crisp green things, the outside haunted by the old mammies, whose dark faces under the silver halos of their wiry hair would have been weird but for the dancing smiles and for the voluble sweet voices in which they cried their wares, “Heah yo’ ar’, honey; heah’s yo’ vi’lets, hens an’ roosters,” wild pansies being the latter variety. “Yo’ be still, now, Abe Tollifer, befo’ de ladies!”

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as a bareheaded and barefooted imp turned somersaults in their path.

“I like to come down here occasionally,” said Mrs. Spence, looking at Mrs. McQueen’s basket apologetically. “It seems pleasant to hear the old voices. I feel at home when I see the people; they speak so affectionately. These aunties with their bandannas, these old uncles with their silver-bowed specs—it brings back the dear days of just a little while ago, and yet so far, so far away! Major Spence seems walking beside me here. And then—then, you know, I have to be sparing. The lawyers, the costs—anything of a large nature so taxes one’s means. And so I like to come here and just look at the delicious things. Those birds in their shining feathers—I can see Major Spence coming home with a string of them across his rifle. Beau’s wife dresses them so delicately. And those oranges! What basketfuls they carried on their heads and tumbled down! Major Spence was so fond of eating one on his fork, peeled and dipped in sugar. Oh, how many a morning whole branches of the blossoming trees have

been brought in, filling the house with sweetness! We used to be rowed down the South Fork, to come back with the boat filled with the orange flowers. Nanny distilled from them a bitter water that was very refreshing. Oh, me! Well, well, we never can recover the old days. They belonged to other people — the young, the happy. If I go back to Mississippi I shall not find Major Spence there. And I really don't know how I am going to stay here."

She started and looked about as if some one had spoken, and then she became aware that she was thinking aloud, and she colored like a girl.

"Mrs. Spence," said her listener, her voice trembling with eagerness, "you're going to come home with me and stay with me and share with me. It is only a hall chamber, but that shall be your own. When the claim is allowed you can pay me. Oh, yes, indeed!" as the little black-gloved hands, showing all their patching and darning, waved agitated refusal. "We're going to have mock-turtle soup and venison;" and Mrs. McQueen's glance, following Beau's,

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fell on an opossum hanging by its heels. "And an opossum!" she whispered, making a sign to the keeper of the stall. "Now, you come right along, dear, and I think I can find some work for Beau about the house. A man-servant does give an air to a place; so, really, you'll be helping me, you see." And suddenly collapsing, Mrs. Spence suffered herself to be led along, Mrs. McQueen astonished at her own courage, but tucking the tiny hand under her arm and hurrying on; Beau glad enough to go for the slender properties.

Mrs. McQueen brought a cup of the mock-turtle soup to the new lodger as soon as she was installed. Then Mrs. Spence lay down, pulling the spare blanket over her, and fell asleep. And although they looked in on her more than once she did not awake until the next morning.

"Now," she said triumphantly, "I can go about my work with fresh spirit. And when Major Spence's claim is allowed, you may be sure—you may be sure, my dear, dear Mrs. McQueen, that you shall never have another solicitude."

"I can't tell you," said Mrs. McQueen to her young son, Archie, who had more regard for business than she herself possessed, "what it is to me to know she has a good bed and enough to eat, poor dear!"

Enough to eat! If Major Spence's relict—to whom sympathy was the bread of life—had overheard those words she would have starved to death in her garret before coming. But she did not hear, and the opossum was not cooked until the next day; and although some of the boarders were disrespectful to the dish, Mrs. Spence thought she herself had never enjoyed anything more than the delicately succulent morsel, which was all she would have on her plate; and the way Miss Celeste Dreer took to it warmed her heart. A goodly portion, however, went to the kitchen, much to Beau's delectation.

"Would'n' de Major smack his lips ober dis yer!" he exclaimed, growing expansive. "Dere's nott'n beats a 'possum's paw, he useter say, 'ceptin' anoder 'possum's paw. 'Pears like," he added on his own account, "a roas' angel'd tas'e jes' dis a-way."

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Tolly, who, coming to see the Conroys, often gave Mrs. McQueen a day's accommodation in the kitchen, turned on him with her basting-spoon. "Huccom yo' know so much 'bout dese yer hebinly powers?" she cried. "Seen 'em t'ick as owls down in dose woods an' swamps, I reckon. *Dis* ain' no place for 'em. Dis dish jes' plain 'possum. De angels don' hab nott'n be'r!"

"When you come to see me in Mississippi," Mrs. Spence had previously said to the young ladies opposite her, and to whom she had been introduced in the parlor, "you shall have 'possum dressed as the negroes have it. I see that you enjoy it, my dear," to Miss Raleigh. "Not that it would be any nicer than this. Everything is most delicious on this table. But each place has its own customs, and Major Spence made an occasion of his 'possum feasts."

And of course these young ladies felt as if their especial protection belonged to Mrs. Spence until they should go to Mississippi, and they vied with each other in giving it.

Day by day Miss Sarah and Miss Raleigh listened to the stories told by Mrs. Spence.

And by and by they took the liberty of looking out for her clothes ; little by little they replaced certain of them — the veil, the ribbons, the gloves. “ It does appear like I had been dreaming,” said Mrs. Spence once. “ These are certainly my gloves. But I reckon I must have dreamed there were holes I had mended in them. I never did get such a heap of wear out of anything. I used n’t to wear gloves much at Beaumara-rai, except in the saddle. Major Spence, of course, wore riding-gloves — he rode so constantly about the place ; the distances on our large plantations are so enormous, and not without their dangers. Once we were riding — it startles me now to recall it — in a far corner of his property, some land that had lately been left him in a more northerly State. And going in among the tall canes, suddenly all the silent world about us seemed filled with great naked tree-boughs, moving barebranched trees rising and tossing, all alive ! We felt as though the earth were turned upside down. And the next instant there was nothing there ; all was empty green canebrake and blue sky.

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They were elks, you know ; a herd that had wandered that way and were resting in the reeds. Major Spence had lost the haft of his hunting-knife, and the only weapon he had was the blade ; and except for his riding-glove he could n't have handled that. It makes me shudder now, though I reckon those vanishing deer were the most frightened. Major Spence was never afraid of anything. Once — But, my dears, I don't want to tire you with my recollections — ”

“ Oh, you could n't, Mrs. Spence ! ” they cried.

“ Major Spence could not, I am aware,” she said. “ He had such a range of subjects. He loved to amuse children with his adventures. He certainly was good to young and old. I think the Lord must remember that. Oh, my dears, he took me out of a convent, where I had learned nothing but fine sewing and painting by theorems, and taught me all I know ! ”

“ Did he ! ”

“ I remember when I came to the plantation, after the convent, how it seemed

like I had two wings — life was so sweet, so fresh, so beautiful! He was so great, so kind. I had such pretty clothes, too, my dears. He — he gave them to me. I wish you had seen my wedding bonnet. He bought it in New Orleans when we first went over. I — I am almost ashamed to tell you, but we — we were a runaway couple. It was very wrong. At least — oh, we were very happy! It was made of white uncut velvet, with wide white satin ribbons and a great ostrich plume, and a wreath of little white roses and green leaves inside, and a blonde-lace veil that fell to my knees. Major Spence said — but it would sound like I was too vain if I told you. But I always remembered! Oh, my goodness! would you believe it? once there were five little kittens born in that bonnet. My dears, I am afraid I have shocked you —”

“Oh, no, no, Mrs. Spence!” cried Raleigh.

“I wish I had one of those kittens now,” said Miss Sarah.

“My love! It would be such an old, old cat!” sighed Mrs. Spence, with a reminiscent shake of her head.

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That night, when Miss Sarah stood before the mirror loosening her braids, Miss Raleigh looking on, "My, what hair you have, and you a No'the'ner!" said Miss Raleigh. "It's blue-black."

"Carthaginian," replied Miss Sarah. "And fit for bowstrings."

"Bowstrings! Then *I* ought to have had it, not you. You women up No'th did n't have to give your hair or anything else."

Miss Sarah brushed her hair for awhile so that she swept sparks out of it. "Do you know," she said then, "I think you're very amiable. You were whipped, and yet you don't seem to have the rancor I should have."

"Whipped? Who? We? We weren't whipped. You were whipped."

"We? We!"

"Oh, you'll find out by and by. The principles that were your salvation went under. You won't see him just yet, but you brought the man on horseback two or three hundred years nearer. You think you ruined the Sooth. You really ruined the No'th too."

OLD WASHINGTON

“I don’t know what you’re talking about!”

“I’m talking about State rights, and Federal power, and great fortunes growing out of wah, and monopolies, and the love of splendor, and the love of conquest. You’ll never be satisfied now till you annex all the islands of the seas —”

“You’re tremendously in earnest!”

“One gets in earnest when giving up so much for her country as I have.”

“I gave my brother,” said Miss Sarah, presently, with a catch in her voice.

“So did I.”

“Was he —”

“Killed? My word! I should say Johnny knew better than to have himself killed.”

“My brother was,” said Miss Sarah, turning with shining eyes.

There was a silence. “Oh!” cried Raleigh then, throwing her arms around Miss Sarah’s neck and kissing her on both cheeks. “I know how I should feel! And there were splendid fellows on your side. I remember —”

“And so there were on yours,” Miss Sarah

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interrupted, answering the gaze of the sky-blue eyes in the glass. "Once when the — the Confederates, then — had made a charge and had been repulsed, and our line lay there, monstrous, impregnable —"

"That 's right. Just pile it on, honey."

"Well, a company came furiously on, just in front of Paul — my brother Paul, you know," said Miss Sarah. "And suddenly the men broke and ran —"

"I don't believe it!"

"They 'd have been too simple if they had n't. But their captain — he was a young fellow, a fair-haired young fellow, straight and tall, with an eye like an eagle — he was far in advance of his men, calling them on, running, waving his sword. And all at once he stopped and looked around, and there he was, alone on the field and a thousand rifles waiting for him."

"Oh!"

"What do you suppose he did? I declare it was a magnificent thing! He never turned his back. He stopped and stood there and folded his arms and looked straight at the enemy and waited for

death. And Paul sprang out and cried, 'Don't shoot! Oh, don't shoot, boys!' And not a rifle clicked. And that nervy fellow calmly gave them the salute and turned and walked back to find his men, deliberately, as if he picked his way. And our men cheered him. The whole brigade cheered him. It was a roar bigger than any roar of battle, Paul said. Don't you think that was fine?"

"Fine! Yes, I do! Don't you know — oh, of course you don't! Oh, I must kiss you! I must tell you! Oh, that was Johnny!"

"Your —"

"They told me all about it. *He* did n't."

"Your brother — well, Paul said he looked like a young god."

"And he owes his life —"

"No. There was n't a man in that line would have fired."

"I don't believe that, either. At any rate, I choose to think he owes his life to your brother. He's coming here this week, and he'll tell you so. And it was worth saving. Oh, there never was so good a boy

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as Johnny ! He 's my very ideal of a knight of the days of chivalry," dancing lightly about the room. "Only he can't ride free-booting nowadays, like those knights did. And there 's nothing for him to do up in our country. And we do hate to say we were ruined by the wah — so many do, you'd think they had terrapin running round the yard like ladybugs. But oh, so many were ! Anyway, there 's no earthly lookout for him at home, and he 's coming here to try for an office."

"I hope he won't have as hard a time as I."

"I don't see why you should have such a time. Haven't you any pull ?"

"Pull ?"

"Oh, you're not fit for political life ! You don't even know the language ! However, I had n't any pull myself. I just went to them, and I told them I must have it. I did n't think it necessary to be delicate. I had as much right to have it as they had to give it. I made out a good story of course. I said I must have it right away. And I got it."

OLD WASHINGTON

“Oh, you! I would like to see any one refuse you — dimples and blushes and smiles and eyes as blue as forget-me-nots —”

“Just heah you!”

“Well, I’ve no doubt I shall end by going back to my school. But I wish — I wish we could save Mrs. Spence from that claim agent before I go.”

“That claim agent? Why, there’s a dozen of him! Oh, now, don’t you be fretting on Mrs. Spence’s account. I know about her. She is second cousin to the wife of General Beauchamp’s brother’s uncle-in-law,” checking off her fingers. “You wait till Johnny comes. Those claim agents will wish it was a nightmare!”

And when she was gone Miss Sarah felt as if it had suddenly grown dark in the room.

It was some time after this conversation that Mrs. McQueen, loitering with her boy for a breath of the late evening, drawn by the ineffable fragrance of the grandiflora magnolia, which blew its heavy gales out half a mile away, was sitting in the shadows of Lafayette Square and watching the stars hang through the branches like the won-

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drous flowers of such a wondrous perfume, and feeling the soft air move about them like a loving, unseen being.

“If one were waiting just outside heaven it might be like this,” breathed a low voice beside her; and on the same bench, in a slightly blacker spot of shade, she recognized Mrs. Spence.

“You really think, then,” replied Mrs. McQueen, “that heaven is a place, and with such pleasures as this dark, sweet air?”

“My dear,” said Mrs. Spence, “I never allow myself to doubt it. Where Major Spence is must be a place.”

“As real as the banks of the Ocala.”

“I don’t know how it can be pleasanter,” she sighed. “If I were there on the Ocala to-night, the breath of the cape jessamines—the flowers that Major Spence used to say have a soul—would be as rich as these magnolias; there would come across it a waft of salt air from the Gulf, and the mocking-birds would be bubbling joyously from swamp and hollow—not like the poor caged things they hang outside the windows here to sing their prison-song at night.

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However," she added, after a quick breath or two, "I shall put an end to all that presently."

"You mean —" said Mrs. McQueen, as the other paused.

"Yes. No prisoners after I once give the word. When I freed the slaves —"

"You freed your slaves? You never told me that."

"Yes; I freed all the slaves in the United States," said Mrs. Spence, quietly.

"Don't you think it is a little damp here?" asked Mrs. McQueen, rising. "Perhaps we ought to go. I'm afraid you have not been sleeping well of late."

It seemed to cross Mrs. Spence that she had said something extraordinary, and she was silent nearly all the way home, trying to regain herself.

The younger people had been sitting on the doorsteps; Miss Sarah, stately, on an upper step with some others, but Miss Raleigh, in a gay mood, walking down the street with her brother John — he also somewhat stately — leaving Captain Pleasants disconsolate upon the lower step. Far away,

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as they strolled, the lamps outlined the mighty shadows of the foundation arches of the Capitol on its hill ; they half divined the steps scaling skyward, and the flying lines of columns, taking a touch of light out of the darkness beneath the dim sublimity of the dome in a mid-heaven where welled the light of the late-rising moon. The moon shone full on John's face, and it was remarked by Miss Raleigh, whose spirits no sublimity repressed, that his head might be that of the Winged Victory if the Niké were not both headless and a woman.

“Oh, let my head alone !” said John.

“I'm not touching it !” said Raleigh. “I was only repeating the fact that all people in all poetry seem to play — let me see if that's right — seem to play — with the same fancy ; the Greeks having a masculine sort of woman-spirit following wah, the Niké ; the Norse having a masculine sort of the same, the Valkyrie. And oh, a lot more ! You don't suppose *I* know anything about Nikés and Ghandarvas ! I heard her say it this morning. And she said it apropos of — ”

OLD WASHINGTON

“Raleigh!”

“Of nothing, then! I’m just ashamed of you, Johnny! I never supposed you’d let your animosity against the Nohth blind you to the perfectly lovely character of a girl —”

“Good Lord, Raleigh!”

“Yes, she is perfectly lovely!”

“I mean — well — I know it!”

“Then you did n’t say that because — you did n’t mean — John Cumnor! Johnny!” hugging his arm. “I might have known — it’s my dearest wish — I’m in love with her myself!”

“One would suppose a man fell in love to oblige his sister.”

“Is n’t she splendid, John?”

“‘Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye,’” the thought ran in John Cumnor’s mind, but he said nothing.

“‘Sarah’ means ‘princess,’ you know,” continued Raleigh.

“Oh, well, it will only be love’s labor lost again. It would be a wild audacity —”

“You do vex me! She’s a woman, is n’t she?”

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“She won’t look at me if she is.”

“She’s been looking *for* you ever since her brother called to his men not to shoot you.”

“Great heavens, Raleigh, you’d drive a man off his head! How do you know that?”

“Oh, I just know it. By the senses you men haven’t a shred of. You’re not afraid to stand up before a whole regiment of enemies, but you are scared blue of a black-eyed girl. Well, I shall be glad to have some learning and intelligence in the family!”

“It looks like it. I can support a wife so well.”

“That will all come right!” cried the reckless Raleigh. “If you don’t get your place you can live with me and study law in Sammy Pleasant’s office. He’ll be doing very well after a little.”

“I study law, when the only thing I’m fit for is riding over a cottonfield or a tobacco farm!”

“Other times, other manners. You’re not a dunce, and you can practise up in our

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county and come back here a Member. That belongs in our family. Now, I'm going to make Sammy a little happier, and you can take the spirit of a man in both hands and ask Sarah to stroll around to the grandiflora. If you don't I'll do it for you!"

As Miss Raleigh said, so was it done. And Mrs. Spence and Mrs. McQueen, going homeward, met the two walking with great dignity and some remoteness. And presently Mrs. McQueen felt Mrs. Spence's hand trembling on her arm.

"There are two young people," said Mrs. Spence, "who, I fancy, are in love. You will not think it an impropriety if I say I have a sympathy — oh, my heart, how happy I was once! Oh, if Major Spence were living, what a pleasure it would be to him, when the receipts from his crops came in, to make these two young people happy! My dear, I am leaning on you too heavily. Beau! Where is Beau? Beau, I will thank you for your arm."

Mrs. Spence went wearily to bed that night, but not to sleep. The street lights

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flickered into her room till she saw visions ; now the white curtains seeming the wings of a great angel, now the dark window space between them assuming the shape of Major Spence, and then the severer majesty of a Supreme Court Justice ; and later, in broken scraps of dream, lawyers, claim agents, treasury notes, and lovers moved before her eyes, together with her once familiar nightmare of a time of hunger where glittering feasts disappeared as she would taste, leaving nothing but the cup whose draught was bitter still in her mouth as she awoke.

But those two young people, sauntering in the charmed glooms of Lafayette Square, were already happy. The vivid whiteness of the moonlight, the blackness of the shadows, the dark blue of the night sky, the murmur of the branches brooding over them, the gleam of lights from the President's grounds, the strange sweetness of the slowly moving air — these were all but parts of the perspective of the new country where they wandered — that dear land of first love. And they lingered in their enchanted parallels till the stroke of a midnight bell broke

the dream, like a finger piercing a bubble. For this girl, with grace in all her steps, heaven in her eye, this young giant, who had the lost head of the Winged Victory, needed something more than ambrosia; and both of them were looking vainly for work.

“I had no right to speak to you!” he exclaimed. “In my circumstances it was dastardly!”

“It would have broken my heart if you had n’t,” she replied.

And then again the bubble built its shining walls about them in the dark.

Miss Raleigh had been passing the time with Mr. Pleasants. “Is n’t Fate the strangest thing in the world?” she said, going up the stairs later with Miss Sarah. “Here it brings you all the way from the Nohth, and Johnny all the way from the Sooth; and you don’t think alike in any one thing; and I’m sure I don’t know how it’s goin’ to do. But you just cayn’t help yourselves, and that’s all there is to it. And I’m just as bad. I ought to — marry — a Spanish grandee or an old Roman prince —”

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“Or a mediatized king!” laughed Sarah.

“But I always knew I should marry some one else. Only I wonder why his name had to be — well, Dennis! I would have liked Etienne de Montmorenci so much better. But there it is. If I finally do give in — Moh would be perfectly shocked if she heard me talkin’ like this!”

Mrs. McQueen herself carried breakfast to Mrs. Spence. “Dear,” said Mrs. Spence, letting the coffee cool, “something has occurred to me. I wonder I had not thought of it before. Suddenly I find that I have been growing old. Indeed, it does not matter. I am only so much nearer Major Spence. Yet if he were here it might be unhappiness to him to see my changing color and fading eye; and to me, too. I might even say that if I had been the Lord I would never have subjected a woman to the humiliation of growing old, — but I will not say what I may regret. I hope — yes, I hope Major Spence will find that my soul is young. However,” she added, with a little laugh, “this garrulous wandering would betray me, if nothing else did. And that is n’t what I

wished to speak about. I have been thinking. I am afraid, my dear, that the agents have been wronging me. Not Sammy Pleasants. He never took any money from me. And he told me it was a far cry to Loch Ay. But it is impossible that at some time Major Spence's claim shall not be allowed. It may require years — more than my allotted term — for the springs of life are failing. And so, dear, I am going to make my will and testament, and leave the claim to you."

"Oh — Mrs. Spence — oh, no —"

"It is due you," said Mrs. Spence, solemnly. "Major Spence would wish to acknowledge your goodness to his wife. I fear it may not help you, dear heart, but it will come in handy for your boy, for Archie. For I haven't a shadow of doubt that a person of Major Spence's prominence will ultimately receive justice. As for the plantation," — she had been speaking very rapidly — "that would be an embarrassment to you. You could do nothing at this distance, and the taxes would devour all you possess. Yet — oh, life there with one whom you love is heaven on earth! I

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always found it so—the outdoor blossoming, bird-singing, bee-humming life. Perhaps some time Major Spence may be permitted to come and see the happiness of those standing in his place. I have a thousand cousins—I mean a great many—none very near, none dear, all having their own holdings, more than they can manage. And so no one will be wronged. And do you think Sammy Pleasants is enough of a lawyer to do it?”

At this lucid point Beau announced Colonel Sharkey in the parlor. Mrs. Spence went forward, and then there was a stormy half hour in that apartment, at the end of which she withdrew her case from that gentleman's hands.

“I cannot believe,” said she, in reply to his assertion that a certain senator of the name of Bortle, known as the real-estate agent of the Senate, must be given money, “that any statement as to the necessity of purchasing a senator's power is not a local slander that allows claim agents a pretext to wrong their clients. I may be speaking too plainly, but if the claim depended on brib-

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ing a senator, it would be lost. And I haven't a dollar to do it with, if I would. I bid you good-day and good-by!"

It was not many mornings after the last interview with Colonel Sharkey that a little woman in black presented herself at the door of the Diplomatic Gallery of the Senate Chamber. She had walked slowly up the Avenue in the heat, Beau silent and solemn behind her, great thoughts with her, even if jangled and out of tune. She had seen the dome soaring buoyant, a cloud among the clouds, a thin blue mist about it, the colonnades beneath shining white above the tree-tops. She had said to herself—as many times before—that history walked here too; that the gods of the Republic had trodden here; that Washington, drawn by six white horses, had dashed down the way in his golden chariot painted with Cupids—and that Major Spence might have had as many more had he chosen. She had climbed the stairway; she had paused afterwards at a southern window to look at the two rivers—one shining silver, one rosily tinted in the light—and at the pillared Heights of Arling-

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ton as at a deserted shrine, not at all minding that she had gone into a committee room where she had no right ; and then she had slowly pursued her way with her thronging emotions.

Perhaps the heat and the drowsiness had relaxed the guard of the doorkeeper ; perhaps he was awed by her air, or by the imposing presence of the big black servant, for she was admitted without question. And leaving Beau at the door, she stepped down to the front, there being no one else in the box, where, seating herself and swiftly waving a small and creaking fan, she watched the proceedings. She was only a little old woman in rusty black, eager, alert ; but any one looking at her might have thought of a pale sweet flower, a trifle heavy with the heat, about whose quivering petals a bee was darting.

The Senate was occupied with the routine attending the close of the session. The day was hot ; the subject was dry ; the clerk read his paragraphs droningly ; some of the senators wrote letters, some read newspapers ; the pages lolled upon the steps and made bets

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on the flies creeping over various bald heads ; there was a general sleepiness pervading the air ; no one seemed more than half awake. No one, that is, but Mrs. Spence. She bent over the gallery, her face white, her eyes glittering, as if life and death depended on the items of the River and Harbor Bill.

Suddenly every one in that place was wide awake ; the Sergeant-at-arms was on his feet ; the Vice-President, thunderstruck, gavel uplifted, was staring at the gallery, toward which every head was turned ; the pages forgot the flies and were running for the doors ; the doorkeeper, ready to avenge the outraged majesty of the Senate, came springing down the steps of the gallery, Beau after him ; and Beau had his mistress in his arms and had carried her into the corridor.

“ It’s Mis’ Major Spence,” said Beau, hurriedly, to the doorkeeper. “ The heat, I reckon, done onsettle her.” For Mrs. Spence had risen and, leaning forward, had exclaimed, her voice like a brook purling over pebbles, but audible through all the Chamber, “ I positively forbid the appropriation of another dollar from the Treasury of the United

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States until the claim of Major Spence, of Mississippi, has been satisfied!" And then she had looked around in amazement and had sunk terrified, but with a glad security, into Beau's great arms.

"It's Mis' Major Spence," he repeated, his words like a torrent breaking through a dam, as he bore her off. "She's quality. She's outdone wid dis yere heat. Bleedzed ter come out widout de hosses—dat nigh one's got a trush in his 'lef' behin' foot. Mis' Major Spence is fust cousin on de Dandridge's side to de Prurriden. Yo' jes' call a kerridge, boss, an' she'll make it right for you."

"Look here!" said the doorkeeper, feeling as if a bronze statue had poured forth speech. "Who's Major Spence? I don't know any Major Spence!"

"Don' know Major Spence! Why, I'd jes' know his skin upon a bush!" cried Beau, as he got his mistress down and into the coach. And when the doorkeeper heard Beau call out, "To de W'ite'us!" he thought it must be quite right, and hugged himself in the hope of some promotion for his con-

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sideration, and told the boys to keep the incident out of the papers ; which the boys did, with the kindly feeling and national pride that makes them cast over the Executive Mansion, upon occasion, the cloud in which the reporters of old wrapped Zeus.

But at the foot of the hill Beau changed his order to the driver. And on arriving at Mrs. McQueen's, Mrs. Spence was helped to bed and given a quieting potion, which set her eyes wide open, as Miss Sarah found whenever cautiously looking in upon her.

She was sitting up in bed at the first cock-crow, surrounded by a litter of papers, and the gas blazing with a stifling heat. Miss Sarah sequestered the papers, and coaxed the little woman into her own room, and put a cold compress on her head, and sat holding her thin hand and crooning a monotonous tune until her listener dozed, although in momentary naps. And Miss Sarah was more pallid in the morning than Mrs. Spence herself ; for that little woman's eyes were sparkling, and she seemed bristling with electric life in every nerve.

“ Oh ! ” cried John Cumnor, seeing Sarah's

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pale face, "if I were half a man I could take you out of this deadly heat and all this uncertainty that is your undoing and mine too! If we were down at Pass Christian this morning, with the Gulf wind blowing —"

"It is Mrs. Spence who should be where the Gulf wind blows," said Sarah. "I am afraid she is in a bad way, and something must be done —"

"You will have to do it, then, I reckon; for no one but you can manage her — you and Beau."

"I suppose I ought to have gone out with her this morning. She seemed so intent and abstracted and on fire by turns. But it is so hot — and I felt so wilted — the air is so withering outside. The leaves hang as if they were faint in it. And I am so discouraged —"

"No wonder!" cried John, stalking up and down the room.

"I see," said Sarah, hesitatingly, "that it is useless for me to try for an office any longer. And I shall have to go home —"

"My darling girl!"

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“At least I mean — I haven’t any home — but to the schoolroom.”

“Which makes it doubly shameful that I have n’t a home to give you! I envy every negro cabin —”

“Well,” said Sarah, “I sometimes think, what if you were a canal boatman and I — Oh, my goodness! what has happened now?”

What had happened was that a pair of mighty policemen had taken Mrs. Spence in hand, and were bringing her along by either arm as limp as a rag doll, and looking as if she would fall in a heap the moment they released her.

For this morning, in spite of the heat, a great function was going on at the White House in honor of a foreign dignitary. And among the uniforms, the plumes, the gold lace, the airy summer toilettes, the magnificence of flowers, the perfumes, the regal band music, the deputies of States and Kings, a little woman had presented herself, clothed in shabby mourning, but with a mien there was no gainsaying; and pausing in front of the President and the line of receiv-

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ing ladies, and the astonished groups gathered about the blue dais-seat behind, she had taken with difficulty some folded papers from her pocket, and in a sweet, clear voice had said, "I regret being obliged to dispossess you, sir, but my duty to the—the absent—to—to one who cannot be here—leaves me no alternative. And in the name of Major Spence, of Mississippi, I hereby call upon you to surrender, and I declare his claim and right and title to the United States, and to all the fields, forests, bottom lands, rivers, bays, inlets, fisheries, and seas adjoining, and —" And horrified, insulted, bewildered, Mrs. Spence found herself seized and hustled and pushed and lifted outside the gates on Pennsylvania Avenue, between two policemen, before whom Beau had again dropped his mantle of silence, and to whom he was protesting as they hurried her along, her feet hardly touching the ground, and her soul quivering in anger.

"If this loidy has anny frins at all, at all," one of them said at Mrs. McQueen's door, "they've a roight to be lukin' after her beyant, so they have!"

“Or it’s to the asylum she’ll be spindin’ the nights, begob!” said the other.

And then Sammy Pleasants, coming along at the moment, gave the men what appeared to be satisfaction and took Mrs. Spence out of the blazing sun.

“She ain’t gwine come to he’s’e’f in dese yere parts,” said Beau, desperately, following with the papers he had picked up, nearly dead with homesickness, as he was himself. “Jes’ git her home wid my Nanny an’ she’d be cuyored up in no time—a-settin on de gallery wid de ole sights, de ole smells, an’ habin’ de ole cookin’.”

“I reckon you’re right, Beau,” said Mr. Pleasants.

“My Nanny, she des natchully mek an eyester melt in yo’ mouf, Cap’n, like a drap o’ dew does.”

“We’ll try it,” said Mr. Pleasants.

“Yassah,” said Beau. “An’ dere ain’ nott’n beats a trial but a failure; I heern de Major say so hese’f.”

And Mr. Pleasants helped Mrs. Spence up the stairway and proceeded to call a council of her friends.

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“It is evident,” he said to them, “that Mrs. Spence must not remain here. Removed from these excitements and placed in the old scenes, frail as she is, she may recover. Now,” continued the young lawyer, looking Miss Sarah out of countenance, “as I lately drew up the will that made John Cumnor and Sarah Woodbury her heirs, it seems to me it is their duty to take her home and manage the plantations for her and make her happy —”

“Sammy Pleasants!” cried Miss Raleigh, “you are a genius! You are the best man in the world!”

“Till she forgets the claim —”

“Oh, claim!” said Miss Raleigh. “It makes me tired! I wonder if Major Spence was such a supernal being that she must needs sacrifice herself, body and soul —”

“He was to her; — a supernal being. But — well — at Mobile, at Bay St. Louis, Biloxi, New Orleans, and contiguous territory, he was as gay an old boy as ever set ’em up all round.”

“Oh!” said Miss Sarah, as if a piece of precious china had been broken.

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“I’m sorry,” said Miss Raleigh. “But it might have been worse. And we all have our ideals.” And lest the look she gave should unduly elate him, she added, “Even you have your faults, Sammy.”

It was a pretty wedding that afternoon, for all the wilting heat, although Mrs. McQueen had had so little time, with preparations to make and trunks to pack. She was warm and tired; but there was a wedding cake from the confectioner’s, and the parlor was wreathed with long stems of the grapevine, and there was a wilderness of pale pink and purple-black and crimson roses everywhere, which the Californian had brought in. And Miss Sarah looked as darkly beautiful as the Princess Sarah of old, when Pharaoh desired her beauty and her husband hid her and passed her on as a chest of pearls. Inside all was dusk and fragrance; outside the air quivered with blue films of late afternoon among the treetops tossing in the hot wind, and among the high marble terraces and shining pillars in the opulence of sky and heat — a heat that made one long for night in the sylvan recesses where the

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Potomac narrows; for the dark fording of the stream, and the coming into moonlight from the forest; for the climbing of Georgetown Heights, and the sweeping by villas hidden in gloom and gleam of garden and fountain, the wind blowing gales of sweetness — nights which were to be part of the delight of Raleigh and her husband through many a summer to come.

“Raleigh,” Sammy had whispered, with eager but subdued emphasis, just before the benediction given John Cumnor and his wife, “there’ll never be a better time for —”

“Sammy,” she had whispered in return, as she bent toward him, her face the color of one of the damask roses, “be quiet!”

“But, Raleigh, if we —”

“I’ve never promised — except — well, except three or four people incidentally. Now be still! Besides, I’ve told you I must keep on with my office.”

“But I don’t want you to, love,” every honest freckle starting into relief.

“That makes no difference. I want to. Johnny will need the money — for two or three years, anyway.”

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“Two or three years!”

“Hush! hush!” in a still more strenuous whisper.

“Raleigh! We will be married now — in two minutes — or never!”

And Mr. Pleasants had nodded to the minister and had produced the license, with which he had warily armed himself against a peradventure, and had taken her hand. “’Pears like ’foh Miss Raleigh could say yes, high or no, she was Mis’ Pleasants,” said Beau, subsequently.

It was a few years later that Mrs. Pleasants was visiting her brother at Beaumarais. The sky was velvety blue that morning; the roses climbed about the main building that had once been partly burned; the passion flowers, the jasmines, overlay it in masses; and a wild orange-tree, that had grown there, rose in a tower of bloom above the ruin. Three or four children, white and black, tumbled together in the broad walk before the wing which was now the mansion, and made one who had seen it think of Babcock’s painting of the little heaven children come down to play with the little children

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of earth. Mr. John Cumnor, sunburned and stalwart, his hat over his eyes, had strolled up from the ploughing and leaned against a pillar of the gallery watching the babies play. His wife (whose marmalade of bitter oranges, by the way, made from a recipe of Nanny's, commands a large sale in the North), white-robed and dark and starry now, paused in the doorway, with Raleigh's arm about her, breaking off a long wreath of jasmine as she smiled at him. And a little old woman, lying back in a chair, behind which Beau towered like a black marble monolith, surveyed them all with shining eyes, her face a transparency with a clear flame behind it. Gazing at her you seemed to see a visible soul. Her eyes looked out as stars do through drifting clouds of night, and now and then a light like dawn glowed with a kindling thought. You fancied that soul you saw was one already gone over to the other life, but called back to the verge again by love.

"Dear," said Mrs. Spence to Raleigh, who came presently and sat beside her, "I cannot help thinking what pleasure all this

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would be to Major Spence. I went away, I remember — somewhere — I suppose he must have sent me — for I brought back all this brightness and blessing with me. He had such a warm heart. He so loved to give pleasure himself. I don't see how any one could be willing to injure him ; but I believe the Government did — in some incomprehensible way — I was never very good at politics. However, I am sure he overlooked it. And this would make him forget any trouble.”

“Dear heart !” said Raleigh, clasping the little hand.

“Do you know, my love, now and then it comes across me here that possibly — it is all so bright, so sweet, so still — this — this might be heaven ? If Major Spence were here I should sometimes think it was.”

“Perhaps he is. Who knows ?” said Raleigh.

But the doubt brought Mrs. Spence back to the earthly parallels. “We are very content here, are we not ?” she continued presently. “I often wonder why the good Lord favored this country so much more

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than harder, colder ones. But sometimes, I am half ashamed to say, I have a dreadful dream that our gentle life here might be disturbed — that some one has something — called a claim — that there is possibly a claim to something which I ought to assert for the sake of these dear people. Is there anything anywhere in dispute? Tell me, if you will, do you know anything about it?”

“Dear Mrs. Spence,” Raleigh answered, “you have established your claim to peace, and no one ever will dispute it.”

V

The Colonel's Christmas

The Colonel's Christmas

MORE or less primitive the large old village was, with its purple cloak of encircling hills. It is no wonder that to most of the Hillburn people the great Judge Alexander's place seemed to compass all that they had ever dreamed of kings' palaces.

It did so to Charles Monck, at any rate, as now and then his errand brought him into the charmed precincts of Greylock and its gardens, where the box hedges grew tall as in only one or two other spots in that part of the country, where there were roses of every tint that roses blow, where the lilies kept their ranks of snow and gold, and the great hollyhocks stood up on their stems like Fra Angelico's angels in their red gowns, their purple and their yellow robes—pictures he came to know later within the house, the house whose wings and bays were veiled with the creeper

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that made it seem in summer almost a part of the forest behind and above it, and in the fall reddened it with deeper and richer tints than belonged to its dull old bricks. Some of those bricks had been brought across seas by the Judge's people more than two hundred years ago.

The Judge had no people now ; his race had dwindled to a solitary representative, and his little daughter had not a relative in the world except himself. And within the house, as the boy sometimes saw, it was a place of soft-piled carpet and marble stair, of long portraits lining the wall, of bronzes and books and rare china and old silver, none of which at the time he knew by name, but all of which spoke to the love of beauty in his inmost soul and made him long to have, at some day, such a house of his own and such a fairy creature in it as Annis, the Judge's daughter, whom he sometimes saw dancing down the long hall, with her burnished hair streaming about her, who lingered looking at him as he went away. Now and then, too, he saw her at church, so demure and still that he

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could only think her like one of the young girls in Fox's *Book of Martyrs*, with which volume he had beguiled many a dreadful hour. At such times she never glanced at him — or if she did it was when the sermon had sent him sound asleep. For what eyes should Annis Alexander have for the boy who drove the farmer's cows? Once he met her in a lane where she was trying to pull the last rose from the top of a tall wild brier, and he paused and reached and broke it off for her, his cheeks tingling, his dark eyes flaming; going then his way without waiting to see that the little lady's face was the color of her rose.

And then an opening had come for the lad into the outer world; and he had left the village and its great house and its gardens and lilies and hollyhocks and a thousand dreams behind him, and had entered into the business of life. Once in a while he had news of the old hamlet — his own kindred were all dead and gone; he heard of the coming of the railway a mile or two away, still leaving the place delightfully remote from noise and bustle; he heard of

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the marriage and departure of Annis, of the death of the Judge's farmer, and that little Ellie, his child, was managing a farm of her own. He sent her once the money to pay off its mortgage, although she never knew from whence it came. He used to dream of the old place, when he had leisure to think of anything but cent per cent; the red hollyhocks stood out in his memory at such times like living personages. He heard incidentally of the death of the Judge. When, finally, he heard that Greylock had been sold to strangers, all his interest in the town seemed to have vanished. But when, by and by, he also heard that the strangers wished to sell, he went up to the place and drove a bargain for Greylock on the spot.

The old Alexander place was his at last. The traces of the strangers he had removed as far as possible, and made the place as much like what it used to be as modern wealth allowed; he laid rich rugs on the stone and oaken floors, he hung silken hangings at the deep casements, but he kept the colors and ideas that the house had formerly. He hunted up a number

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of the old portraits that had drifted off here and there from sale to sale, and if he added to them some marvellous French landscapes and Spanish figure pieces, he did it with the taste and knowledge he had made his own in his city life and in his foreign travel. And there were books, and portfolios of prints, and fine trifles on which art had expended beauty and money too; and the house was still wreathed with its creeper and honeysuckles in summer, and in fall great logs blazed in the chimneys. And the new owner closed his various branches of business — a rich man now, well past forty — and came up to Greylock, and made his home there, and found that no home was good for anything without a wife, and bemoaned himself that he had been so busy making money and informing himself how to spend it that he had had time to make the acquaintance of no one who could supply the element without which his house was so lonely and his life so barren. He wished he had made friends with the minister's daughter while there was yet time, and before she had gone elsewhere. He even

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thought whether or not Ellie, the farm manager, would fill the deep armchair within the Flemish screen on the other side of the library fire ; but one glimpse of a face like old ivory answered him. As for Annis Alexander, she was only a remembrance ; something of the nimbus of the Judge's superior glory surrounded her still in his thought ; he would never have regretted her, for it would never have crossed his mind that she could have been within his reach. He did wonder more than once what had become of the minister's daughter — he remembered how she sang on summer nights ; but he doubted if the girl had even known his name. He was a humble-minded man, for all his success and his money ; these called him Squire, and those called him Colonel — he had had command of a fancy regiment once for a short time ; but to himself, in his inmost consciousness, he was always the plain farmer's boy going after the cows, and possessed of an intimate diffidence.

Not that he did not know all the advantage of wealth ; what it was to be a power

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on Wall Street, what it was even in the village, that had grown into a region of costly summer places, to be the master of Greylock — indeed, there were many members of the summer throng that were not slow to teach it to him. But he knew that something much more quiet and simple than followed in their train was what he needed ; their life was foreign to his pleasure. His heart warmed to none of them ; they were too fine, too splendid and pictorial, with their plumes and ribbons, the sweep of their gowns, their airs of fashion, far too fine for the taste of the farm hand. For even after his long years of business, after his travels about the world, his days passed in galleries and his nights at operas, he called himself a farm hand still, happier looking over his cattle, and planning his crops, and setting out hedges, and developing new seedlings, than in doing anything else. Yet when he sat down at his lonely dinner table, finer than the Judge's ever was, with a butler standing behind him as pompous as the Judge himself, "I am as solitary," he said, "as the pelican in the wilderness."

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He felt it in the summer twilights, as the mountain stood out black before the paling sunset, as the dew fell, the perfumes wandered faintly from rose and carnation, and the whippoorwills in the wood below began calling to one another, far off and sweet; he felt it beside the fire that wallowed up the chimney in the late autumn or the early winter nights. "What would I give," he said to himself, "if there were a wife and children here, and there were to be anything like the Christmas cheer that belongs to a place in which a man without wife and children has no right to live!" And he had his bag packed, and made off now to this city and now to that, as regularly as the snows whitened Greylock and gave him new longing for the Christmas joyances that should belong to home. He envied then the men he saw buying gifts, the crowds bearing parcels; he felt defrauded that he had no one whom he could make glad with anything but charity. He made to himself some feint of business to hinder the weariness that sometimes fell upon him in such wise that it seemed better to risk and lose

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all he had than to go on in this humdrum fashion of success, without a stir in his life.

Some interest in Departmental affairs took him in one of these late autumn seasons to Washington. It was tiresome. He might have found pleasure in the debates, but Congress had not yet assembled. He spent a little time in the Departments; a little time in the clubs, and won and lost a little money; a little time in the Library; a good deal of time in the hotel lobbies; it was all rather a bore; the only thing he enjoyed at all was driving about the streets, that gave him some half a hundred miles of velvet to drive over, with a high-stepping horse he had. And thus it happened that, a sudden tempest of rain coming up and making the concrete slippery as glass, the horse fell and threw Colonel Monck out, his head striking against an edge of sharp granite, and when he was picked up and carried into Mrs. McQueen's boarding-house, near at hand, and the doctor summoned, it was discovered that his ankle was badly injured, and it was thought best, on account of the wound on his head, to leave him

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where he was rather than take him to his hotel, the letters in his pocket showing that he was Colonel Monck, and that he was staying at the Arlington.

“The poor soul! the poor soul!” he heard a voice murmuring—far away outside, it seemed. “To think it was our carriage step! Oh, I am so glad he is here to be taken care of! No, no, no, doctor, don’t speak of it—a hospital! Do you think any one of those nurses will take the care of him that I shall?”

“I doubt if you have not enough to do, without this, Mrs. McQueen,” said Doctor John.

“I can manage,” sang the cheery voice. “I shall think all the time, what if it were my Archie?”

“Your Archie is a boy of fifteen, and this is a man of fifty—or thereabouts.”

“Archie will be fifty some day if he lives,” said the little mother. “And he may need a good turn. I’ll pass it on. And Milly can wait on me, and Florry can do the marketing—she has gone with me once in a while, and it’s time she took some respon-

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sibility. Or I can get Mrs. Jack Knowles' Tolly to help. Oh, we can manage it!" and she tied her worn black bonnet strings with determination.

"Very well," said the doctor. "I will be in again this evening, and then possibly we can decide more intelligently what is best."

And when he came again Colonel Monck was quite himself and able to express a preference for staying where he was. Not that it made much matter — he was tolerably disgusted with fate and things in general; but the hands were tender here, the voice was kind, the way was gentle, and for all he could see he was as well off in this third-rate boarding-house as he would be anywhere else, and could have as much of a Christmas here as at the Arlington.

In fact, in a very few days the Colonel was as well as ever, except for the injured ankle, which, however, was mending rapidly; and he had begun to find the situation a trifle more interesting than life in the lobbies. There was the little woman herself, whom nearly every one in the house, with conde-

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scending patronage or kindly familiarity, called Queenie, a new character in his experience — shabby, a black veil always wrapped about her head when she was not wearing the old black bonnet, forever at the call of all the various household, and unchangeably gentle and smiling and silver-tongued ; no sort of a manager, and making up for her lack in that direction, and the poverty which obliged her to do with poor service, by the unceasing effort and industry of her tireless hands and feet. There were the boarders, too, going up and down by the open door — some clerks, men and women ; the private secretary of a cabinet officer ; a yellow-haired lady with a claim upon the Government, and a congressman who came to see her about pressing it ; a politician staying temporarily while urging his right to an office, but bidding fair to make a winter of it ; and a widow of narrow means and wide ambitions, and her companion, who spent the cold weather there. And there were Milly, the dark-haired stepdaughter of the landlady, who sat at the head of the table and wore a good deal of tarnished

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splendor; and Florry, the fair-haired one, quite as splendid as her sister; and Archie, the boy who was studying might and main and was the only real help his mother had, besides the slatternly colored girls with their hair braided all the week in little pigtails, which gave their heads a strange resemblance to the porcupine jars in which hyacinth bulbs are just sprouting. Archie came in and read him the evening papers; one and another of the boarders called, and some he asked to call again—not the yellow-haired lady, nor the gentleman who tumbled upstairs after midnight. He saw Miss Milly now and then whisking by the door in a dressing-gown and crimps, and later in the day she dropped in, with her war-paint and feathers on, to tell him stories of the fine people whom she did not know by sight, and give him accounts of the dinners and receptions for which her soul longed and for which he did not care a farthing, and to talk of the dramatic heroes and heroines and express her delight in the theatre, where on fortunate nights she could see and become a part of the world she admired. And

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Miss Florry set the doors open and played to him from the drawing-room such music as was hers — and she had not a little talent at the piano — and came in afterward for her reward in the admiration that a man of the world should not but feel for a young woman who managed marvellously the train of her gown and had no other particular recommendation. In fact, the whole family understood that they had among them a man to be made the most of, a millionaire sort of man, whose like they had not fallen in with before and might not meet again ; and the widow of narrow means confided to him her woes ; her companion had woes of quite as much weight ; one of the clerks told him the virtues and uses of a small capital in lending money at usurious interest in the Departments ; and the other clerk told him of the family at home dependent on his salary, and of his daily suffering through fear of the sight of the heart-breaking yellow envelope. And one of the office-seekers came in and fought over the battles of the Wilderness, in which he had borne part, and explained to him the mistakes of Grant and

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Lee; and even the airy private secretary, who was by no means on the pinnacle he had enjoyed before the Colonel came, condescended occasionally to hint to him the real facts about the situation of various public affairs. The Colonel thought he might be able to put the clerk who lived with that yellow sword of Damocles over his head in a more permanent situation. He even promised to exert what influence he had for the man who had had no chance to direct the great battles as they should have been directed. He pitied the widow, and he surreptitiously offered the companion a railroad ticket home if she felt her bonds unendurable. And he sent Archie to buy a frequent box at the theatre, which such of the family as pleased should occupy, of which Miss Milly and Miss Florry forthwith made themselves proprietors, sailing forth in great style and holding the fort of the two front seats, chaperoned by the widow, and asking whom they pleased to join them. They had before been able to go (in no sort of style at all) only when Miss Virginia Cantrell sent them tickets for her nights, but

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since Miss Jinny's marriage to her Jerome there had been no tickets, anyway.

"Have n't you gone to the theatre?" inquired the Colonel, when this had happened a second time, and the house was still, and little Mrs. McQueen came in with a cup of something appetizing.

"Oh, no," she answered him; "of course not."

"Why of course not?" he asked, surprised.

"Oh, it is so long since I have been to — to such a place."

"That is no reason. What else?"

"And I don't care about it."

"Why not?"

"Why," she said, laughing out of a pair of eyes that he noted, not for the first time, were of the softest wine tints, "how can I say? I am so accustomed to staying at home."

"And letting those two girls go instead!"

"You know," she said, "one can be young but once."

"Young! And how old are you, may I ask?"

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“Oh, I don't think it is proper for you to ask at all,” she said. “You see, I can't be very young, with Archie, and those two great girls calling me mother, and my own little Louie over in the convent. I had just as lief you'd know, though. It doesn't really make any odds when one is as old as I am. I am — I shall be — forty — my next birthday.” And a pretty color streamed up the soft oval of her cheek as she made the mortifying statement.

“I shall be forty-five,” said the Colonel. “And I don't regard it as such a vast age. In fact, I feel as if life were all ahead of me.”

“That is different. I suppose — perhaps — I have lived more in forty years. At any rate, I have had more trouble. And I don't know anything that ages one like trouble.”

“Have you had trouble?” asked the Colonel, wincing a little just then with pain.

“Have I had anything else?” she answered, with a smile that was like the watery gleam of sunshine on a dull day. “No, I shouldn't say so, when I have

Archie and Louie ! Oh — let me loosen that bandage. There — that feels better ? Now Archie will come and read to you. I have to boil over the crab-apple jam, and it is a good time to do it when I sha'n't be interrupted."

Poor little woman, as the Colonel saw, her interruptions were ceaseless. There was a perpetual jangle of some one's bell, which half the time she answered — Beau, who had gone home with his mistress, being greatly missed, and the boy who came in the middle of the day and officiated as butler and man-of-all-work, for his dinner, either not being there, or taking too long to find his clean apron ; and she always hurried for the postman ; and she had to follow Mirandy round with a second duster, or go over the glasses with another towel ; or she was coming up heated from supplying the slips in the kitchen ; or she was patching Archie's clothes while Archie sat beside her with his book, his arm over her shoulder, she once in a while turning her head to kiss his hand. And then Miss Milly was asking her to mend a skirt for her ; or Miss Florry wanted something downtown,

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unable to go herself, and Mrs. McQueen trudged out to get it and walked because she must spare the car fare; and this boarder sent for her to see about nothing; and that boarder hunted her up to complain about another nothing: and there was the look of a hunted hare in her eyes, for it was Mrs. McQueen here, and Ma there, and Queenie in the other place, as if she belonged to any one but herself; and almost the only real pleasure she had in life was when she could get over to the convent with Archie and see her little Louie, who was not so very little, after all. And Colonel Monck, thinking it a good accident that brought him here, where he might find a side of life he had not known before, began to think also that all the saints are not on the calendar, but that one of them, at least, was to be found in the drudge of a Washington boarding-house.

“You know,” said Miss Florry once, when the Colonel intimated something of the sort, “it is n’t quite as if mamma were really our mother —”

“Really your mother!” cried the Colonel.

“Do you mean to say she isn’t your mother?”

“My gracious! Queenie! No, indeed! I guess not,” says Miss Florry. “Why, papa married her when she was a widow with two children! It was very good of papa. Our own mother — why, she was one of the Virginia Brierleys! Then he was ill, and she took care of him till he died; and of course we are sensible of it; we are very fond of Queenie. Papa, you know, lost everything in the wah, and that is the reason mamma takes boarders now. It seems hard to have papa’s name used so; but she had the furniture, you know,” said Miss Florry, taking the head of her hat-pin out of her mouth. “And she either had to do that or we had to — to starve, I reckon. And there it is, you see.”

“I see,” said the Colonel.

It was on returning from the theatre one night, where they had enjoyed Colonel Monck’s box as box was never enjoyed before, that Miss Milly and Miss Florry, in the privacy of their hall chamber, were combing out their pretty locks.

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“I don't know, Florry,” said her sister, pausing, comb in air. “It looks like it. I never saw more pointed attentions—so many flowers and bonbons and novels, and this box at the National, and his horses down to drive when we please. The only thing—the only thing—”

“The only thing is that we don't know which one of us it is,” said Milly, as she stood with her head bent, and the hair drooping over her face in a veil, while she flourished her brush vigorously.

“It's absurd, isn't it?”

“I hope it's you, Florry. I'm sure I had as lief it were you,” said Milly, after a few moments of silence, as she gave a screw to the slip of lead in which she folded her crimp.

“You're very good, Milly. I don't know. You are prettier than I; but then there's my music. But we've always had each other's things, so that it really wouldn't matter. Still, there'll be diamonds in this case; but perhaps mine would be enough for two. And they say that country-seat of his is an earthly paradise. I don't care; whichever one of us

it is, we shall be together; and, oh my! to have a home of our own, with no rent hanging over us, no bills to pay, no hateful, hateful, insolent boarders—oh, that would be a heavenly paradise! It's true there's this encumbrance; but then he is really a nice old gentleman. I could love him very much if he were my father. My gracious! why can't he just adopt us?"

"Well, he can come back a Member whenever he pleases; perhaps—just think—a senator! And to be a senator's wife! To be here after the holidays, anyway, senator or not, and give a cold stare to those people who have given us their airs! Oh, one could marry a much worse-looking man than he. He's not so very old, after all. And really he's not bad-looking at all—when you think of Senator Bortle. And Connie Gilroy might have married that wretch if it hadn't been for Mr. Jack Knowles."

"She never would!"

"You would never think he was just sprung from the people. And papa's family—"

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“Oh, I'm sick of papa's family,” dabbling in the cold cream. “What has it ever done for us? Not half so much as little Queenie here. And I've made up my mind! If he asks me I shall take the goods the gods provide. Oh, the exquisite relief of daring to look the grocer in the face!”

“The delight of silk stockings!”

“How extravagant you are! I only ask for enough lisle-thread ones never to have to darn any. And to be able to wear all the white skirts I want—”

“What daydreams! I'm afraid none of them can come to pass. But if they did, Queenie should never do another day's work. She does too much already. I'm ashamed of it—I'm always meaning to reform. She has all the wrong side, and we have all the right—if there is any right. If we were going to stay here I think I should make a fresh deal and take a little more on my shoulders, at any rate. Oh, it's too good to be true. There! You ready?” And out went the gas, and left them to their slumbers, and the dreams of

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Worth and Pingat and Félix, with stray flashes of diamonds and prancing of horses, and cold eyes of hostile women, and Queenie in a towering hat and feathers, and girls who were themselves and not themselves, and Colonel Monck in sack-cloth and ashes.

The poor Colonel, unconscious of all this way in which the Fates carried themselves concerning him, was meanwhile turning over quite different thoughts in his mind, now burning with indignation as he saw the way in which the little woman was at the beck and call of any one in the house — “People not fit to lace her shoes!” said the Colonel; and now his heart warm with pity as he saw her willingness, her patience, her untiring way of taking things for granted that amounted to sweetness, her perpetual answer to the perpetual demands early in the morning or late at night, having her bite and sup when she could get it and at any hour, humble as if from long habit she never thought of being anything but glad and grateful that she was allowed to breathe, ready to do more and have less were

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it necessary for Archie's and Louie's sake. His eyes followed her, and his ears listened for her, and he found himself wondering and fuming, and then asking angrily what business it was of his, and wondering and watching again.

"What did you marry Mr. McQueen for?" he asked the little woman, abruptly, as she bandaged his ankle one night, the girls and various others having gone to make the most of the theatre box, and he and Mrs. McQueen being quite alone.

She started so that the black bonnet fell on one side and caught in a pin, and out tumbled a cataract of rich dark red hair, full of golden lights and waves; and the more she tried to restrain it, the more it would come, till she had to fling the bonnet off altogether and attend to gathering the great masses into their coil again.

"Why in the world do you always cover up such hair as that?" he exclaimed.

"Oh," she answered, "with Milly and Florry round — young ladies, you know — and I their papa's widow — it — it would n't do, you know."

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“It wouldn’t do?” said he. “And so you efface yourself that they may be seen! If you gave any one a chance to look at you—if you dressed like some of the women I have seen, you’d be younger than the whole kit of them!”

“I? Oh, you forget! I told you I was almost forty—and—and twice a widow,” she added, with a pathetic sort of sigh.

“You didn’t tell me why you married Mr. McQueen,” he insisted then.

“I don’t know why,” she said, after a moment, looking down and intent upon her work. “He was so poor, and he had these young girls, and no one to see to them or to do for them—or for him either. And I had, at any rate, a kind of a home. And the girls were running wild. He was quite the gentleman—a gentleman of the old school they call it, you know. But he was a man. And a man is so helpless,” said the forlorn little woman.

“And is that the reason you married him?”

“I don’t know. I can’t exactly tell—he said I had better—he said I must—and

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I did. I thought it would be good for Archie to have a father. And he was very fond of me, I think. He only lived a little while."

"And were you fond of him?" asked the remorseless Colonel.

"I — I — pitied him. Do I hurt you?"

"You? With those fingers? They are like the touch of rose leaves. Could they hurt any one? However — yes, that's easier — has a man only to say you must marry him for you to obey? Tell me another thing now: did you love your first husband?"

"I was sure I did at first," she said. "Now I wouldn't ask any more questions."

"Yes; I want to know all about you. When did you find out you didn't?"

"Oh, too soon! too soon!" she cried, in a sudden gust of tears, letting the bandage fall, standing up, and dashing the drops off with both hands.

"Tell me all about it," said the Colonel, reaching up and taking one of the hands and pulling her to a seat on the lounge beside himself.

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“I was very young—I was not what you see me—I was as well born as—as any one,” she said between her sobs. “He brought me here—we were on the top of the wave—oh, it is hard, hard, hard to recall it—”

“Don’t, then—don’t, my dear,” said the Colonel.

“It was all right while my dear father lived. And then he ran through with the money; he had horses, yachts, wine parties—oh, it was fine till it was dreadful! He gambled. He drank. I don’t know what he didn’t do. I know he beat me! Oh, what am I saying to you? Archie’s father! But it is true. When I—I—hesitated about giving him the last of the money, he would threaten me with killing himself. I gave it to him. He did kill himself one day—poor soul! oh, poor soul! And I had nothing left but the house; they took the house for his debts, but they gave me the furniture. We lived on the sale of the pictures and books and marbles a while. And there were Archie and Louie,—and the disgrace—the disgrace of it!” she cried,

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burying her face in the bonnet that she groped for and found. "I hid myself"—as the Colonel took away the bonnet—"I hid myself! I tied up my hair; I kept under my veil. People forgot me. I pass them now—they used to dine at my table—they never know me. I know they don't! But at last we had to do something—and the boarders were different persons from those we had known—and we had been so poor, so half famished, I felt as if they were guardian angels when they came. And then Mr. McQueen asked to come, with his girls—and nothing was any consequence—and that is all."

"I suppose you never thought of marrying a third time?"

"A third time!" she cried, so indignantly that her tears were like sparks of fire as she faced him. "What do you take me for?"

"Very good men, and women too, have married a third time, even when the other times were not a mistake."

"Oh, I dare say!" cried Mrs. McQueen, tossing her head. "Very good. But I

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should not like to tell them my opinion of them !”

“Let us see,” said the Colonel, calmly. “Your first husband abused you and ruined you. Your next one was merely a matter of charity with you. Why should you not have a husband now who will be what the word signifies, who could give you a home, a rich and beautiful home indeed, and peace and security and comfort in it, who could give Archie the education he ought to have, Louie the place in society she ought to have, provide properly for these young women—and they might really be very decent girls under different circumstances—who would protect you, confide in you, honor you, love you? Queenie,” said the Colonel, “I have more money than I know what to do with. I have a home,” he said, untroubled by any remembrance of Claude, “with lawns and gardens about it, valley and river below it, hills, great hills, behind it. But what sort of a home is it? It is so lonesome it is like a tomb, and I have to come away from it. If I had a wife there, if there were young people moving about

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the place, with their interests, their companions, their pets, their work, their pleasures, caring for me a little, growing to care for me more, keeping me young — oh, it is very selfish — but now that Christmas is coming, and Christmas fires might be rolling up the big chimneys — ah, who could ask for more? I am not young — I have none of the graces wooers ought to have. But I could promise a wife care, gentleness, faithfulness, admiration — oh, yes, even love, if it were — if it were you, Queenie!”

“I?”

“Yes, you!”

“I never thought of such a thing!”

“Think of it now, then.”

She had turned, looking in his face in her amazement, her dark eyes glowing, the color flushing up and down her thin cheeks, her lips trembling — they were delicate, finely curved lips. In a moment the Colonel had bent over and kissed them. And then he gathered her in his arms and kissed her again. “Just try to love me, Queenie,” he murmured.

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“Oh, I shouldn’t have to try!” sobbed the little woman on his breast.

And that night the Colonel could not sleep for seeing a fairy form flitting in pale muslins between the snowy lilies and the red hollyhocks of Greylock, lovelier in his sight than any flower, in spite of her forty years.

“Doctor,” said Colonel Monck, the next morning, “I think this bandage can come off now. I am quite sure I can stand alone without it.”

“Nothing rash, nothing precipitate, sir,” said the doctor. “We don’t want to have you lamed for life, you know.”

“It is not much matter if I am. I have a shoulder to lean on now. I am going to be married. It is late; but better late than never. If you have nothing to hinder, will you leave this note at Wormley’s as you go by? It will bring me a friend who will attend to some little formalities. And will you send your bill? Here, this is my address, sir; it will be attended to as soon as I reach home. I shall leave for New York this afternoon, thanks to your skill. It is rare skill, my dear sir; money, I am

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aware, does not pay for such things. Some time, when you need a season's rest, you come to Greylock, and my wife will do for you a part of what she has done for me. And let me tell you, there will be some pretty girls there — my stepdaughters. You're a young man, and it's a strange thing, but young people find young people pleasant company. Yes, nice girls, and with good marriage portions, each of them," said the unblushing Colonel, his happiness developing in him new and singular powers for matchmaking. "But I'm in no hurry to think of their leaving the place."

And the Colonel carried things with this high hand over every one. When Queenie protested that she must wait to get a gown, he also protested that dresses, velvets, cashmeres, laces, diamonds, furs were to be had in New York, and there they should be found, and they would leave Milly and Florry to dismiss the enemy, sell the furniture, and give the landlord the key of the house, and follow with Archie and Louie in season for a Christmasing that should make the old house thrill in all its timbers.

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And leave that afternoon he did, his friend attending to everything, and he himself not looking at license or certificate, nor seeing the amazement, the consternation, the self-conscious glance, the look of shame, that passed between the two young ladies when he announced that he had been married to their mother a half-hour before, — Mr. and Mrs. Pleasants, besides his friend from Wormley's, having been the only witnesses, — seeing only the soft rose-color on his wife's cheek, the sweet droop to the pensive mouth, the white eyelids with their long dark fringes. And later, as he looked at the great lance of light with which the Monument pierced the winter blue of the vast sky, and the mighty dome floating like a snowy cloud above the sunset and just faintly blushing in it while receding from him, he breathed a benediction on the town for giving what was to him its chiefest treasure.

And when he brought his wife to Greylock, after a sufficient stay at the Windsor for all purposes of apparel and finery, she sitting now very still in the covered sleigh and trembling so that he feared it was

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with the cold, despite her royal sables, and pulled the robes about her, and bade John hurry the horses, and lifted her into the great house, and seated her by the fire in a chair that received her as if its deep close arms gave her welcome, "This," he said, "is home at last. My little darling, what makes you tremble still? Is it so strange to have love and a home of your own once more?"

"Oh!" she cried, looking up at the portrait of the old Judge that hung upon the wall before her. "It always was my home. You never asked me—you do not seem to know that I was Annis Alexander."

The Colonel was on one knee beside her. If she had been a king's daughter it would have been something less in his eyes.

"And you are my wife!" he said. "To think of it! And I—I drove your father's cows. But a prince could not love you more."

"You are more than a prince to me," she cried. "You are the greatest, the best, the most beautiful of men. We have lost twenty years of life we should have had. I knew it was you. I—I always loved

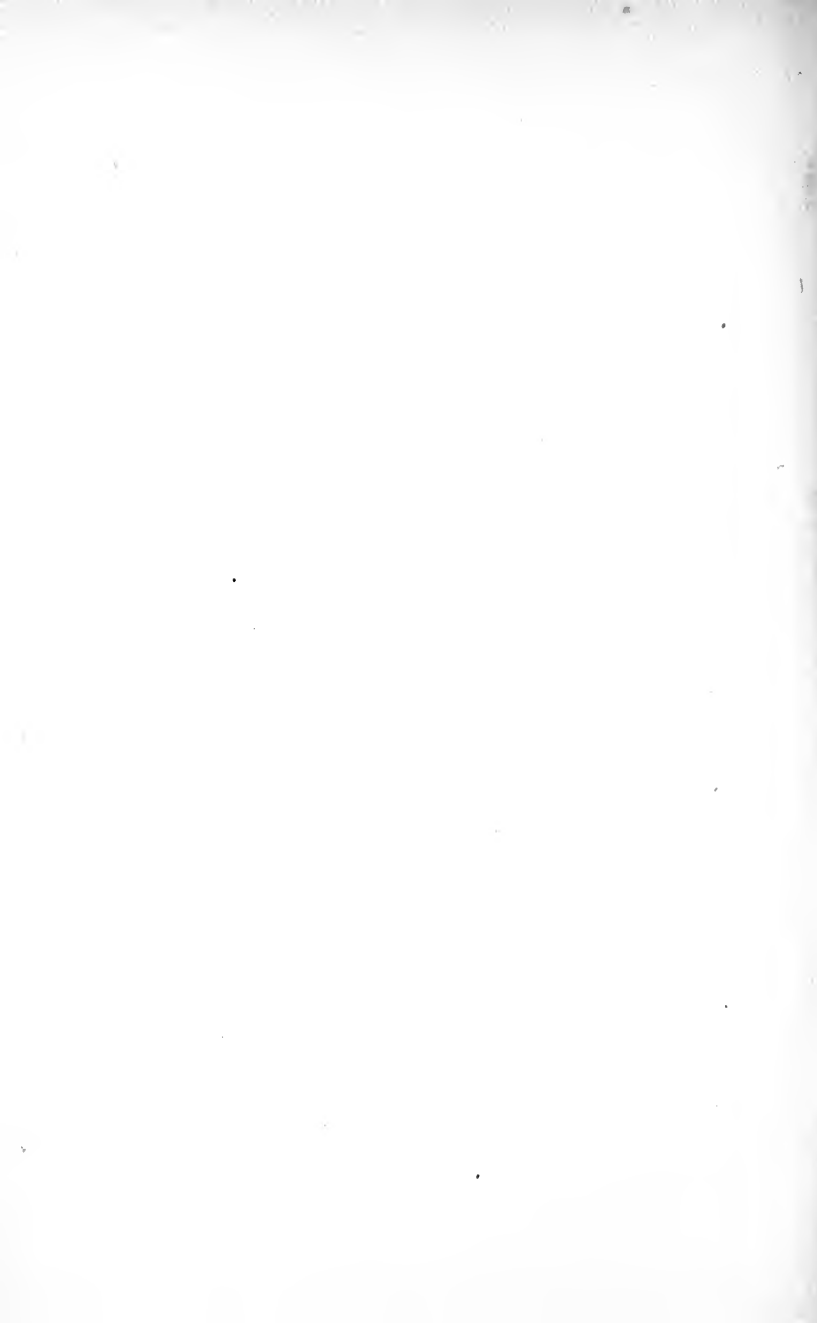
you — at least I think I did. I know — I know I love you now!”

And when, late in the next week, as the twilight of Christmas eve was falling over Greylock, and the fires were flashing ruddily through the deep windows, Colonel Monck came in, his arms and pockets full of parcels, and had a glimpse of Louie and Archie, with their arms over each other's shoulders, half buried in a lounge beside the hall chimney and reading from the same book, while the glow and flicker of the burning logs played over them, and heard, tinkling under Florry's fingers in the room beyond, the tune to which in a mirror he saw Milly, holding up her pretty dinner dress and dancing with Celeste Dreer, who had come up for the holidays, while at the sound of his feet stamping off the snow they all sprang with joyous greeting, and the gladdest greeting of all was in the two tender brown eyes of a little creature who looked in her silks and laces, with her shining uncovered hair, almost as much like a flower as a woman — a happy little woman who had bloomed into beauty under the sunshine of his love — then for

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the first time in his life he knew what home was. He looked about him at the rich and lovely scene, at the yellow Persian cat rising from the rug and arching its back and sweeping its feather of a tail in suspicion of the great Dane who stalked at his heels, and he noted the spicy perfume of the burning logs, the fragrance of the flowers, and felt that it was all his own, with a sort of fierce joy at its being shut in by the wall of storm without.

“This is happiness,” he said to Queenie. “This is something worth coming to. Now we shall have Christmases, and birthdays, and anniversaries, and by and by wedding days, and children going and children coming. And life has just begun to be worth living!”



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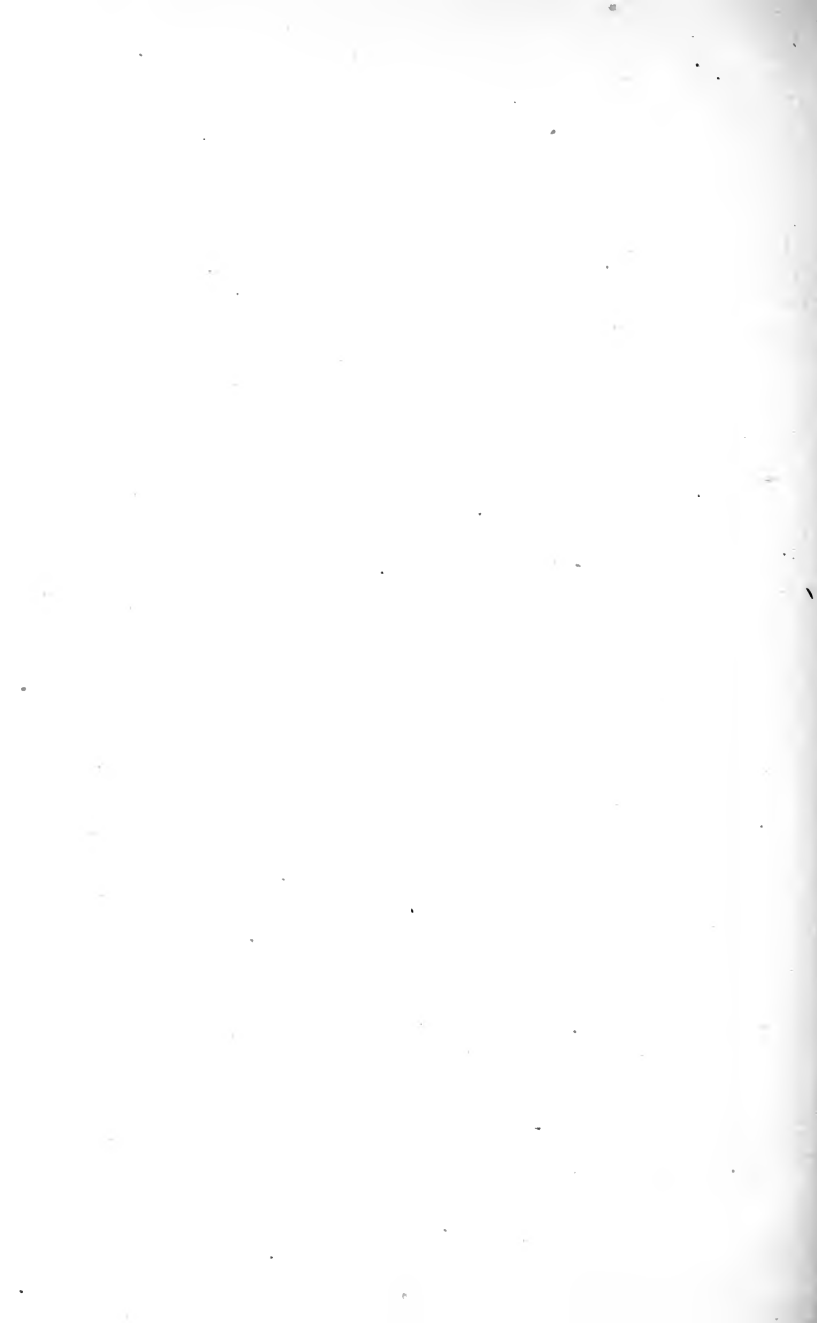
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